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THE
Y O U N G B R I D E.

A NOVEL.

BY
MRS. BRISCOE.

“ Now imaginings will hover
Round my fireside, and haply there discover
Vistas of solemn beauty.”—KEATS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

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THE YOUNG BRIDE.

CHAPTER I.

“Where’er I go, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravelled, fondly turns to thee.”

GOLDSMITH.

COLONEL HARDY, and nurse, lost not a single moment in hurrying homeward, immediately on the departure of the train which bore Mary away. They, fortunately, met with no hindrance or obstruction on their way; and arrived at Fortfield before any surmises of their absence had arisen. Hardy sent his companion on before him to the house, while he remained to give up the horse and jaunting car to its owner. Nurse, however, did not

get back before he overtook her ; she, at once, was immersed, as if nothing uncommon had occurred, in her numerous duties. Hardy, hastily undressing, was in his bed before the servant came to his room to call him.

Mr. and Mrs. Sutton returned to Fortfield, the same day. Their surprise and astonishment were unbounded, when they heard the news that awaited them. Mrs. Sutton, with the candid, honest, open-heartedness, which so strongly marked her character, wept long and bitterly, as she listened to the recital of poor Mary's trials. The extreme affection, and regard, which she felt for the young and innocent sufferer, awoke all the womanly and tender feelings of her breast ; and she felt truly grieved that she had been away from home in her young friend's time of trouble and distress.

For a day or two, everything remained quite tranquil at Fortfield. Mrs. Sutton decided that neither she, nor her husband, would return to the sea, at present ; not knowing at what time pursuers might arrive, to seek after the fugitive ; and wishing much to be on the spot, in case of that emergency occurring.

Poor, miserable, heart-broken Hardy, endeavoured to keep himself up, and battle strongly against the warrings of his own miserable breast. It would be utterly impossible to give a just idea of his state. He crept about the house, and plunged into the most lonely nooks of the estate, to escape observation, and shun all society. He was intolerably agitated and nervous, at every sound that stirred about him. He was careless of everything, but the one weighty agony, which overpowered his heart and brain. He found out, from the workmen employed about the place, that the stranger, who had brought such misery along with him, was seen constantly wandering about Fortfield; and that many other strange-looking men were likewise remarked lingering about, and, evidently, keenly watching all that went in and out of Fortfield House.

Not a syllable of Mary's departure had, as yet, transpired beyond the nursery. She had so often been ailing, and been confined, for days, to her room, that her absence was not noticed by the servants in general; and Hannah and nurse alone knew of the fact of

her absence. It was evident that the watchers did not dream she had flown, and were directing all their attention to observing every thing connected with the house and its inhabitants. A few days more passed in unbroken order, and still the strangers strictly maintained their watch and ward. It was thought best by both, Mr. Sutton and Hardy to permit these persons to patrol at their pleasure, and seem unconscious of their intrusion.

On the morning of the sixth day, from Mary's departure, the Fortfield family were seated at breakfast. Suddenly the rapid whirling of a carriage, to the door, caused a painful sensation, of intense excitement, to pervade the heart of Hardy; and, also, nervously affect the feelings of Mr. and Mrs. Sutton. Ere a moment had elapsed, the door of the breakfast-room was thrown open, and three gentlemen entered.

Mr. Sutton rose, at once, to receive them, but his manner showed extreme trepidation, when they announced themselves to be Sir Aldrich and Colonel Bulstrode, accompanied by a friend. The noble looking old baronet appeared very ill, and quite worn out with

fatigue. Extreme agitation pervaded his whole frame, and Hardy was quickly near to him, with a chair, into which the old man sank quite helplessly. His eyes glanced rapidly round the room as if seeking some object of absorbing interest; and he drew a deep heavy sigh as his gaze returned, only, upon the forms of the occupants of the apartment.

Colonel Bulstrode, without seating himself, or attending, in any way, to the salutation of the Suttons, spoke—

“You will pardon our intrusion, sir, upon your privacy, in such an unceremonious manner; you will make allowances for us, I trust, when I say that my venerable uncle, Sir Aldrich Bulstrode, comes with me to claim, from you, his granddaughter, my wife, who, we are credibly informed, has been a resident in this house for eight months, past, under a feigned name, as governess to your children.”

“I regret, very much, Colonel Bulstrode, that I cannot comply with your request. The young lady to whom you allude, and whom we only knew as Miss Dalton, left this house some days ago, alone, during our absence at the sea.

I solemnly swear I know not where she has gone to."

At these words of Mr. Sutton's, which were spoken coolly, and calmly, Sir Aldrich rose and exclaimed—

"Pardon me, sir, for doubting your statements, but it is utterly impossible my grandchild can have left your house without the connivance of some person in it. It is utterly impossible, I reiterate, and as there is a Heaven above us, I shall, and will find her. I have the assistance of her husband, the aid of the law; my, own power over her, to enforce her return to her home. I shall have this house searched closely and minutely, I come, backed with the iron power of my country's laws, to assist me. Conceal my child, therefore, if you dare."

"My uncle Sir Aldrich Bulstrode, speaks justly," said Harold. "We have, with extreme difficulty, traced my wife here, to this very house. Within one short week she has been seen and recognized, with your family. My emissary has, since the time he saw her, strictly watched the house and all entering and leaving it. He affirms no departure took place by night or day, since my wife was seen to enter it."

Mr. Sutton coolly replied, though he felt his passion rising, and his blood boiling rapidly.

“Gentlemen, I have spoken the truth, relative to the lady’s departure, and my ignorance of her destination ; you may believe me, or not—just as you please. But you are all heartily welcome to make a strict and immediate search, in, and through, every part of my house and premises. During my absence from home, with Mrs. Sutton, I am informed that Miss Dalton met with some serious annoyances, while out with my children. I understand that, in consequence of this annoyance, she, on the following morning, was nowhere to be found—her room was empty—her bed unslept in. My three daughters, who occupied the same chamber as their governess, knew nothing of her departure. All her clothes were left behind her ; and not a vestige of her can we trace. On my return home, I was informed of the extraordinary occurrence ; and deeply I regret it. It was a source of sincere trouble, to both Mrs. Sutton and myself, that we have been deprived of a dear and valued friend. Our children have lost an excellent and talented instructress ; one of

whom we never can hope to see the equal."

"Instructress!" exclaimed Sir Aldrich, his voice trembling with pride and passion. "Instructress to your children, sir! How dare you breathe such an expression in the presence of me, her grandfather, of Colonel Bulstrode, her husband? Do you not know, sir, that the oldest blood in England courses through her veins—the oldest, noblest heritage in the land is hers? The proudest name, and most untainted lineage, claims her. The descendant of Saxon kings—the representative of the ancient Bulstrodes, an instructress to Irish savages and paupers! By heavens! 'tis too bad—too presumptuous to be believed! I cannot stand it. The girl herself is crazed, gone raging mad with folly, that could so utterly demean herself, so wholly degrade her family. Worn out with age and infirmities, I have laboured and travelled unceasingly to find the idol of my soul, the treasure of my life, my precious darling child, and after months of horrid care and anxiety, wearying journeying, and loss of health and strength, I come but to find my hopes a mockery, myself deluded and deceived." As he spoke, the

proud old man bent his head and wept.

“My good sir,” said Mrs. Sutton, who had not spoken before—“my good sir, I deeply sympathize in your affliction and distress. The possession of such a treasure as your granddaughter belongs to but few. Her sojourn here has been one of real, unmixed pleasure and advantage to us; and though the amiable and lovely girl may have degraded herself in the eyes of the world, and in your estimation, by holding the position in my family that she did, she has, at all events, won the warmest admiration, affection, respect, and esteem from all who saw and knew her. Never for one instant could I think her to be what I now find she was. Humble, resigned, and diligent, she made us all and each happy, and contrived to mould the Irish ‘savages and paupers,’ as you call my children, into amiable and refined beings, from their association with her. My absence from home at the unhappy time of her flight, has filled me with sorrow and apprehension of the severest sort; for she was not well, and far from being able to endure the hardships she must have encountered. I would gladly make any sacrifice to

provide for her comfort and safety, did I, happily, know where to find her."

"Your sympathy is needless, madam, I assure you," replied the haughty, insolent Harold. "My wife, Mrs. Bulstrode, requires no provision to be made for her security or comfort from the hands of strangers. Sir Aldrich Bulstrode, as her grandfather, is the only person from whom my wife must deign to receive any aid or sympathy. Our only business here is to claim and find the lady, the sooner that is done the better for all parties. With your permission, there must be this very moment a strict and rigorous search made through the house. Your servants and your family must be examined. We have the assistance of a detective force that has accompanied us."

Mrs. Sutton replied in an equally haughty tone, and with much dignity of manner—

"Sir, you may make any and every search you choose, if you have any doubt on your mind of my solemn assurance that the lady is not here."

Harold answered, sharply—

"You may believe her departure to have

taken place during your absence, madam ; I do not. You were from home, it is affirmed, when that departure took place ; you may have been deceived—indeed, I think and believe such to be the case. Mr. Snow, Sir Aldrich's auditor and secretary, asserts that after his meeting Mrs. Bulstrode, no one left this house. He followed her from the place where he met her, and saw her carried off the vehicle on which she had been driving, and brought into this house. He asserts that she was looking ill and weak, unable, in his opinion, to leave the house—at least, alone and unassisted. There were six children, two servant women, a footman, and a young gentleman, accompanying her on that afternoon ; those persons must be all strictly examined. Immediately on forwarding the intelligence of having discovered Mrs. Bulstrode to me, Mr. Snow engaged the aid of some assistants, to watch this house, and all connected with it, night and day. For six days and nights, he and those assistants have maintained a strict, unsleeping vigilance until this hour. Therefore, you must pardon my doubting the assertion of the lady's flight, and the ignorance of

your family and servants on the subject. We have come thoroughly authorized by the power of a husband's rights, and the strong arm of the law, to enforce my claims, and seek till I find."

"You shall have every assistance, sir, that I can offer," said Mr. Sutton. You are at perfect liberty to commence at once, when and where you please." So saying, he rang the bell, and on the entrance of the servant, issued orders to have the strange gentlemen, and their attendants, shown through the whole house, how and as they choose.

Sir Aldrich did not accompany his nephew in the search. He allowed him and his assistants to go without him. Indeed, the wretched old man was unable to make the exertion, so sat silently and haughtily in a large arm-chair, shading his eyes with his hands and handkerchief. To the kind attentions which were shown to him by Hardy, and the hospitable offers of Mr. Sutton, he vouchsafed no answer or reply, but remained nervously listening to every sound he heard, and every word that was spoken outside the open doors.

Hardy remained quietly endeavouring to

master his excited feelings, and endeavouring to regard in a favourable light the proud grandsire of his beloved Mary. He seemed unconscious of all that was going on about him, but, in truth, he was fearfully anxious, and nervously awake to every circumstance. Mr. and Mrs. Sutton could mark accurately his deep emotion and painful feelings, and note the agitated tremor that pervaded his whole frame, and racked his breast with intolerable suffering. Pale as death, and cold as marble, he did not stir, or look off the newspaper, which he mechanically held, unread, or unthought of. The stern Harold, and his haughty speeches, were before him, and ringing in his ears; they filled him with terror and alarm for the safety and happiness of one dearer to him than his own existence. The hurried glance he had taken of the determined man, was enough to drive the life-blood from his beating heart. The cold, self-reliant tones in which he asserted his right to claim his wife, and his determination to seek and find, rung through poor Hardy's brain with excruciating torture. As he pondered and thought over, and over, of those words, he felt the

dews of deep, over-wrought excitement spreading over his whole trembling frame. There he sat, nearly motionless, watching occasionally the Herculean frame of the baronet—that cold, unkind, unnatural old parent, who had inhumanly sold his granchild's happiness for vain-glorious worldliness and bigoted pride.

Poor Hardy! how little had he thought or imagined, when first his breast had become enslaved by the modest worth and unpretending grace of the simple Mary, that agonies, such as he never endured, would be the penalty of loving her so fondly!—aye! loving her truly, and fervently, and disinterestedly, with such a mine of deep, devoted, unselfish love as woman was never before worshipped with.

The whole morning passed away in the same way, with those who occupied the breakfast-room. For hours, the tedious and useless search after the fugitive was continued; and the examination of the children and servants, was carried on by Harold himself, aided by Mr. Snow. No intelligence could be obtained, of any sort, relative to Miss Dalton. This was to be expected, as, in fact, no one knew she had left the house, till this inquiry had

been instituted. No one, saving nurse and Hannah, were in any way cognizant of the fact of her elopement. Of poor, innocent nurse nothing could be made by her examiners. She could not be made to understand why she was questioned about the governess. She had become very deaf, had a bad gathering in her ear, and was quite stupid. She was nothing but a bothered old fool, on whom it was of no use to waste time. So she was given up as a useless witness. Hannah could say something, and gave her evidence with every appearance of confidence and carelessness. She found Miss Dalton's bed empty, when she went to call the children in the morning; it was just as she had left it, after turning it down for the night, as usual. She saw Miss Dalton, at nine o'clock, on the night of her flight; she was lying, very sick, on the sofa, not like anyone that could run away. She never went to bed when the children did, but was in the habit of going to the school-room again, and sitting up reading: so that her not going upstairs that night, was nothing uncommon. She always suspected she was born to be a lady, and not a governess; but, wherever she went,

she was an angel, and no doubt of it. She went on to say, that she found the library-window unbarred, on the morning before she found Miss Dalton's bed to have been unslept in ; so, she was quite sure, it must be through that window that she escaped. This information was all that could be got out of her ; so she, in her turn, was dismissed with the other servants.

Harold Bulstrode and Mr. Snow, at last, returned to the breakfast-room ; the former looking black and furious, like a thunder cloud. He approached Sir Aldrich, who started up wildly, as if from sleep, as he came near him, and said—

“ She is not here, certainly, uncle. She has again escaped us. But we must soon find her ; she cannot be far off ; she cannot have got completely away, in her delicate state of health, especially as the place has been so closely watched. Take courage, my dear sir ; she must be caught, without any doubt ; she cannot elude the vigilance with which I shall conduct the search. We shall start in pursuit at once ; you and I one way, Snow another, and the detectives another.

A very bitter groan burst from the old man, as he said—

“She has eluded us a year and a half, and more, already, Harold. I may never live to find my darling. You, my dear nephew, may, and can follow the pursuit, it is right that you should; but I cannot—indeed, I cannot. I am weak, and ill, and very wretched—sick unto death—heart-broken! My last hope of finding her, is gone—that strong hope, which bore me over land and sea, to find my own precious Mary! I shall return, by easy stages, to Dublin, with Walters; and, when able, shall try and creep back to Bulstrode. I am not able to encounter more now, Harold.”

“Please yourself, my dear uncle, you have held up too well and too bravely to give away so suddenly. You shall do, however, as you please; perhaps it is best for you to go to Dublin, at once, with Walters, and rest quietly there for some days; while I scour the country, and use every exertion to recover Mary. It is a great pity, that she should not know how very ill you are, and weak, and then she would lose no time in rushing to you;

if she did, she could not easily again escape us."

"Ah! Harold, I very much doubt that she would now hasten to me. That time is gone, I fear, for ever. She does not love me now, as she once did, she only fears me, perhaps she hates me, too. There was a time when nothing could separate us, when her love was trusting and unbounded. Alas! alas! Harold, my heart's idol, my only son's child, his only child, my pride, my comfort, my delight, she flies from me, and grovels to the earth to shun me. My nephew, let us leave this place, now, at once—I am ill, very ill.

"You shall leave it, sir, immediately, as soon as Walters can bring round the carriage; I have already ordered it. Colonel Hardy, I believe I address you, will you permit me to claim the favour of a few minutes conversation with you, in private. You may, perhaps, be able to throw some light on this mysterious matter, of my wife's elopement, as I understand you were with her at the time of her being met and recognized, by Mr. Snow, and I believe you have not left Fortfield since."

Colonel Hardy bowed as haughtily, as did the other speak. With feigned indifference he left the room with him, at the same time stating his utter inability to give any information, on the subject of Mrs. Bulstrode's flight. He added that he was totally ignorant of where she then was, and, that from the cautious and dignified reserve of the lady's manner, he could not possibly imagine what her plans were. However, he accompanied Harold to another room, where he found Mr. Snow and the detective officers, The few questions that were asked and answered, were of little avail or importance, and his examination lasted a very short time, and ended without any surmise being entertained, of his being a participator in the fact.

Sir Aldrich was obliged to accept Mr. Sutton's offer, of taking some wine before he left Fortfield. Indeed, he was so very weak, and his steps faltered so much as he walked to enter the carriage, that he was almost carried into it, by Walters and Mr. Sutton's servants. Harold, who looked alarmed at his weak and failing state, accompanied him, arranging with others of his party that he

would meet them at a neighbouring town, next day, to continue the pursuit. A very deep sigh of relief was breathed from the heart of Hardy, as he saw the carriage drive off, and passing by the windows, proceed down the avenue.

How thankful he felt that as yet, the dear hunted fugitive had escaped, and that the examination and search at Fortfield, had ended so well. At all events, it was quite certain that by that time, Mary had reached some harbour of safety, and might eventually, escape the risks with which she was threatened.

The worthy Suttons rejoiced exceedingly at the way in which everything had terminated, and felt with Hardy, unmitigated disgust at the hard-hearted and unmanly part, played by Harold Bulstrode. The old man was to them all, an object of pity and commiseration. His pride had worked its own punishment, and filled his proud, passionate breast with bitter remorse; bringing his gray hairs with sorrow and self reproach to the grave.

Until now, Hardy had feared to leave

Fortfield, lest his absence should in any way injure Mary, or cause it to be thought that he could enlighten Colonel Bulstrode if he chose, on the subject of her flight. But he could not longer remain inactive, and determined to start next morning to Dublin, hoping to find there, before him, some tidings of her. A whole week having elapsed since she left, so that he might hope for some intelligence.

But when he got to Dublin, he found no letter had come for him, to the direction of Captain Williams. Almost wild with dread and alarm, he at first determined upon setting off for Galway; but then prudence and second thoughts prevailed over inclination and impulse. He remained from day to day, a prey to all sorts of fears and horrors, but at length, at the end of ten days from her departure, he was rewarded for his days of fevered impatience, and his nights of sleepless uncertainty. One morning in an almost hopeless state, he enquired at the Kildare Street Club, for the letters of Captain Williams, when, behold, his eyes were blessed with the sight of one directed in a well-known hand. Catching it wildly from the waiter who handed

it to him, he hurried off to his own apartment, and locking himself into it, broke the seal, and with devouring eyes, and throbbing heart, read—

“This will give to my kind and dear brother the certainty of my safety. The delay in sending a letter has been caused by several circumstances, and not by forgetfulness of my best and only friend’s anxiety on my account. When I left you, I did not think that I should ever live to the end of my journey. I was ill, and very miserable; so desolate that I seemed completely hopeless, and felt so. A miserable, long day of incessant rain, was that one in which I travelled from my home and friends, away I knew not whither. A long, fatiguing night’s voyage shattered all my remains of strength and courage, and threw me, sick in mind, and weary in body, on the mercy and kindness of a good Samaritan. This woman treated me as her own child, housed, comforted, nursed, and clothed me for a whole week, and then forwarded me in safety to this haven of rest, opened to me by the kindness of nurse. I am nearly well, and strong as ever I hope to

be ; I have perfect rest and peace of mind, and freedom of thought and body—what more do I require ? I would gladly remain here, in this quiet place, if I could ;—but that would be impossible—my mind must be employed, as it has been ; I cannot remain inactive, brooding, in solitary despair, over my troubles and trials. You, my kind friend, must seek out for some secure home, out of this country, where I may be usefully employed and engaged ; and where I may be respectably situated—I care not how humbly—far from the busy world. I would go as a teacher in a school most gladly, provided I may never be required to go abroad. I would even venture across the Atlantic, and take chance for providing means to get my daily bread, if the transit there could be effected with safety. Once in America, that land of liberty, I might hope to hide myself for ever from danger and suspicion. I would be a companion to some elderly lady, who needed an automaton to read her to sleep, adjust her work, and listen to her discourse. I have not, I believe, a bad temper, and I know that I can bear and suffer much ; so that, perhaps,

this last scheme would be the best for me, if practicable. In writing to me be careful to enclose your letters to my hostess, Mrs. Lydon, for Miss Humphreys,—we can no longer place confidence in ‘Miss Dalton.’ You will, I am convinced, not leave me in ignorance of the occurrences connected with me that may take place at dear, hospitable Fortfield, but let me have a full account of every particular. I truly grieve to think that, by my means, your excellent aunt, and her household, will suffer annoyances, and be subject to intrusions; but she is so very generous and forgiving that she will make allowances for the cause, and exonerate me, in her own mind, from the blame due to such proceedings.

“Writing to you, my friend, is a pleasure to me, who cannot, by any means, forget for an instant, my own great sorrows and afflictions. Your sympathy is very valuable, and your friendship precious beyond expression. In the full confidence of that fraternal regard which you have promised to remember me with, now and for ever, I rest, completely satisfied and contented. I ask for no other friend, nor another protector. You know

full well that the necessity of venturing upon the world alone compelled me to reject the comfort of your accompanying me in my escape. Propriety, not my own will, demanded the sacrifice of separating myself from you, and from your protecting care; you will, therefore, make allowances for the apparent ungraciousness with which I rejected your kind offers. Write often, I entreat you; be candid and open to me, as I shall be to you. I must say farewell to you now, for writing confuses my head, which has not ceased to ache since we parted. I cannot much longer hold my pen; but I must try to do so till I tell you, once more, that I remain, now as ever, my dear friend, your faithful and confiding sister."

CHAPTER II.

“Fly to the desert, fly with me.”

WHEN floating on the tide of prosperity we seldom know what we are capable of doing, because energy and exertion are not needed, nor are they required; but on the rude and tempestuous sea of adversity the case is quite the reverse. Young as Mary was, the various circumstances and adversities of her eventful life had compelled her to fathom her mind; and she had by those means found energy, exertion, and strength within it, when required, that was most wonderful. She now once more set herself to the due and im-

portant consideration of her present position, resolving to bear with patience, and continued resignation, the trouble appointed to her lot; and remain where she was in hidden security until the present violent energy of her pursuers should subside. She would then trust to the exertions of Hardy for finding her a suitable home elsewhere, where she could once again, by her own exertions, turn to good account the abilities and talents with which providence had so liberally blessed her; firmly relying upon the protection of heaven for guiding and leading her aright through the crooked and mazy paths of the life that lay before her.

In one way or another she contrived to gain more and more upon the good will of Mrs. Lydon. She resumed her own gentle manner; and, oftentimes when her swelling heart induced a murmur at her fate, bravely struggled to resist the debilitating influence; while, like a lovely flower of spring, that, spite the nipping frosts and blighting winds, breaks forth, the growing ornament of advancing seasons, she grew each day more delicately beautiful.

She never ventured outside the sanctuary of her own small suite of rooms, though she longed for air—pure, fresh air. Her languid step, and pale cheek, often implied the necessity for exercise and change out of the close, confined apartments which she occupied. Excluded from the enjoyment of the summer breezes and balmy winds—shut up eternally alone, with no companionship but her own sad thoughts—her time hung heavy on her hands. She had no books to amuse her or wile away the weary hours; perhaps, if she had possessed them she would have been unable to arrest her thoughts and fix them upon them. The weather was fine; and Mrs. Lydon's house commanded a view of the bay from the window of Mary's sitting-room. Sometimes she would take up her pencil and unthinkingly sketch views of the broad Atlantic and the surrounding scenery. Over and over she traced the same unvarying landscape, for she had no chance of changing it; as day after day she sat alone, looking out on the one well-known point of view. She loved to catch the varying hues of aërial tints—the different aspects of the 'ever-moving and mysterious sea'—the

purpling haze—the crimson glow—the dark shades which from time to time, one and all, passed over it—the rocky cliffs, with their surging waves riding high and foaming over them—the distant mountains, and the shrouded cabins—the ivied spire—the hardy fishermen of the Claddagh, with their moistened nets—the tired labourer creeping, hungry, and weary, to his wretched hovel—the beggar, old and worn, but blithe as Irish beggars ever are—the playful children, just let loose from school, rushing into the happy liberty of sun, air, and freedom—these, and only these objects, were the diversities which her pencil and water-colours had power to copy.

Mrs. Lydon had a little shop, in which she sold threads, tapes, cottons, and various small wares. Amongst her miscellaneous goods she vended tobacco—the best in all the town—right sterling stuff; from whence she imported it, no one knew; but a son, who was a sailor trading to Galway, got the credit of supplying his maternal parent with more and better of the soothing weed than ever came to her through the medium of the custom-house. Of the excellence of the ‘fragrant leaf’ the

officers quartered in the town were fully aware ; and the demand for it was quick and constant. One day it chanced that Mary wanted some little matters for her drawing, and her bell having been unanswered she thought she would herself step as far as Mrs. Lydon's parlour, and make the demand in person. On getting into the little sitting-room, which opened into the shop, she saw that Mrs. Lydon was engaged disentangling some knitting-cotton for an old countrywoman, who was purchasing it, therefore, she had no scruple in going forward into the shop to arrest Mrs. Lydon's attention. A huge bale of goods was placed on the centre, so that she did not perceive that a chair was beneath it outside ; and that on the chair was seated an officer belonging to a cavalry regiment in Galway. Failing to catch Mrs. Lydon's glance, she walked up to her, passing as she did the son of Mars, who, in a half lounging attitude, was waiting for the old woman's cotton to be delivered to her, before he could make his own wants known. Though humbly clad, the air and appearance of Mary was unchanged ; and she looked fresher and more lovely than the

morning rose. The unwonted exertion of hurrying down-stairs, and being obliged to go out into the shop herself, called up the faintest and most delicate colouring to her cheek. At once she riveted the attention of the military hero.

She was not aware of the circumstance for a moment or two, she was making her wants known, and requesting Mrs. Lydon, at her convenience, to get her what she required, which she had noted upon a piece of paper; and as she was engaged in reading it out to her landlady, she did not notice the person who was so intently regarding and admiring her.

In an instant, after finishing her memorandum and consigning it to Mrs. Lydon, she turned, and saw the officer, who stood up as if to approach her and speak. With a vivid blush and extreme agitation she almost flew through the intricacies of the path behind the counter, through the door and up to her own apartment, greatly annoyed at her own temerity in venturing out of her usual course of strict privacy.

The honest shopkeeper was immediately

beset with queries and inquiries. There was no such thing as getting out of the officer's importunities, no evading his questions. Who was that beautiful girl? where did she come from? what was her name? what was she? Mrs. Lydon could only answer that she came a day or two before, was an old friend, and was going away next day. All that was unbelievable, the fair apparition had spoken, that was enough to declare her English and a lady; her form had flitted before him, and he knew that it was graceful, her countenance, for an instant, had beamed on him, he beheld it beautiful. So he cross-questioned the old woman, till she got into a passion, and almost ordered him out of the shop; this assured him that there was some mystery connected with the young lady, and he determined to make every exertion to fathom it.

The next day, from morning to night, daily, hourly, the little shop was beset and besieged. At first, only by the officer himself, and, then, when he perceived his unassisted and unaided exertions were useless, he called his brother officers, at least, a chosen few, to his aid. He described in glowing terms the

beauty of the fair being he had seen, and roused, by degrees, the curiosity of, at least, half a dozen of his comrades. Mrs. Lydon never sold so much tobacco before ; she never had her shop so filled. She was pestered unceasingly with importunities, flatterers, coaxings, threatenings ; but true as steel she parried off, with the tact of her countrywomen, all the stratagems which were called into action. This annoying, and unceasing prying, was concealed from Mary, as Mrs. Lydon and her daughter judged, and with truth, that the knowledge of such conduct would seriously alarm and grieve their sensitive lodger, whose constant and unchanging entreaties for seclusion and privacy, determined them to second her wishes, and in no way to allow any intrusion or disturbance to reach her, that they, themselves, could possibly prevent.

It was weary work for Mary, to have nothing ever before her mind but memory, and that so deeply coloured and tinged by suffering. Her morning meal was untouched, her simple dinner, hardly touched, her tea partaken of more out of a wish to please her landlady than from inclination. Rising at six, when the

stir in the house proclaimed the family up and busy, struggling with the leaden hours, as they passed in unbroken succession, till a late one warned her to her sleepless bed; this was the monotonous course of her first month in Galway.

But she had one enjoyment, she had one friend to whom, now and then, she could write, and whose answers repaid ten-fold in number, and extent those that she dispatched. Hardy wrote to her continually; to do so, was the sole pleasure of his life. He told her all and everything connected with the visit of Sir Aldrich and Harold. He dwelt long and earnestly on each particular connected with the old man; his feebleness, his emotion, his deep love for her, his self-upbraiding. He told her how he could trace her likeness to him; how his heart yearned to one who stood in such close affinity to her, as did her grandsire; and who evidently idolized her, as he did. In short, it was such a letter as he knew would comfort her. But of Harold he could not write, he merely named him, as '*her cousin.*' Then followed other letters, sometimes cavilling at the coolness and shortness of hers, and

breathing unalterable love and devotion, warm, unchanged, and deep as ever. The search, he said, was still continuing with unabated energy ; he, himself, remained in Dublin, so that he could, with ease, and convenience, receive her letters, and write without observation.

One evening, after an intensely hot day, in which the burning rays of the sun had rendered Mary's room a perfect oven, Mrs. Lydon came up to her, with an entreaty to accompany her and her daughter in a short walk. Mary had no bonnet, she never had needed one, from the time of her arrival, in the blue hooded cloak. But Mrs. Lydon offered to supply the want, with one of her own, so Mary, to gratify her, accepted the proposal, and accompanied by both the old and the younger woman, set out. The shop was closed, the door was bolted, and, having made all things secure, the two sallied forth into the evening air. Leaving the town, they turned into the open country, and entering a garden, belonging to a friend of Mrs. Lydon's, sat down under the spreading trees, upon a grassy slope fronting the west. There they tarried to see the sun sink into the ocean, the

twilight following as quickly as if that luminary had been quenched by the waters, into which it had seemed to vanish. As the darkness became greater, the old woman proposed to return homeward. Mary had been sitting still, looking upon the sea; she had been silent, lost in thought. On hearing Mrs. Lydon's voice, she roused herself from her abstraction, and, obeying her proposal, rose and followed her. They walked slowly back, and presently entered the comparative darkness of the streets, no light disclosing who they were, excepting when the glare of a lamp, as they passed it, shone for a moment upon them. None of the three spoke, as many persons were abroad, and the fine night had induced the tradespeople to go out and enjoy it. No one appeared to notice the little party, till suddenly, when close to a gas lamp, three officers approached, and placing themselves directly in front, utterly impeded their progress. At first the women tried to pass the intruders quietly, but when they found that impossible, Mrs. Lydon burst forth into vehement invectives, and poured forth torrents of abuse. However, the young men did not

mind her ; they continued to stare rudely at Mary, who, frightened and alarmed, endeavoured to draw back, and hide herself behind her friends. But all was useless ; the intruding trio had an opportunity of seeing a very lovely face, and they did not allow it to pass without making ample use of it. Then, as the females rushed past them, they followed closely, and kept up with them till they reached Mrs. Lydon's house. At her very door there was another lamp, so that the officers again rudely stared, and attempted to converse with Mary. Mrs. Lydon was a very long time getting the house-key out of her pocket, and then she was longer trying to unlock the door. At last she succeeded, and, hurriedly closing the door, left the officers outside, in high spirits at the success of their stratagem ; for they had seen the party leave Mrs. Lydon's, had followed, and remained outside the garden, into which they had no means of gaining admittance. They patiently waited at a little distance, then dodged the incognita home. So there was an end to evening walks.

The fair, young creature trembled excessively when she entered the house, and sunk

into a chair in her own room. She was agitated by intense fear, as she imagined that these strangers must be emissaries of Harold's, sent to watch and trace her. However, Mrs. Lydon calmed all her fears when she told her who the strangers were, and why she had been insulted and annoyed. Mary determined that henceforth nothing should persuade her to venture out of the house.

Thoughts of the future were beginning to weigh heavily on Mary's hopes, as week after week passed, and she remained a prisoner in Mrs. Lydon's house. It happened one afternoon, at the close of the sixth week of Mary's residence in Galway, that several of the garrison tormentors of her peace were strolling up and down in front of her window. Her blinds were down, but as the window sash was raised, she could hear their talking and laughter. Suddenly the voices were raised in welcoming some one who approached. She could hear the warm, cordial greetings, and the earnest entreaties that the new arrival should accompany them to mess. The answering voice she could not hear; it was low and indistinct. After a little while, there was

quietness, for the whole group disappeared together. Mrs. Lydon had been watching them, and their proceedings, and she remarked to Mary that a very fine, handsome man, who looked like a *real gentleman*, had come up the street, and was crossing towards her shop which he was closely scrutinizing, when laid hold of by the officers, who seemed delighted to see him. They had a long conversation, in which the good woman was sure they had informed the stranger that they were watching her lodgings; for the officers had pointed to the house, and told something to their friend, which caused him to look, too, and then turn off, accepting the invitation of the officers, and accompanying them, without again looking towards the house.

Mary was glad when she found the officers had at last deserted their post, and permitted her to draw up the blind, and look out upon the bay. Her tea was served, and after its removal, she drew her little sofa across the window, so that, without being seen from without, she could lie down and gaze forth, with the evening breeze wafting in to cool the apartment, and her fevered frame. For two

hours she remained so, and the noise from the street became hushed into silence.

The business of the arduous day being over, Mrs. Lydon and her daughter sat in their parlour, making up the accounts of the day, and entering them, with their usual punctuality, in their ledger. They were roused from their occupation by a knock—a very low one—at the hall door. Mrs. Lydon answered it. As she did so, a gentleman entered into the hall, and, closing the door behind him, informed her that he came on business of importance, and wished to speak to her. He was shown into her parlour, and, after a moment's pause, asked her, was she Mrs. Lydon. She replied that she was. He then told her that he wished to see her lodger, Miss Humphreys. At once the old woman was on the alert; and she said Miss Humphreys never saw anyone. But the gentleman, taking a note from his pocket-book, requested Mrs. Lyden to carry it up to the young lady. With some difficulty she was persuaded to do so; and as it was dark, and no light in Miss Humphreys' room, she took the precaution of carrying a candle with her, that she might at once read the contents.

Mary was half asleep, when the light floated upon her eyes; she had been dozing and dreaming, and, for a moment, could not fix her attention to what Mrs. Lydon was saying; at last, she sat up, and, taking the note, opened it. There was only one word in it, and as she read it, her whole frame thrilled with pleasure and renovated hope; she turned to Mrs. Lydon, and said—

“Oh! let me see him—is he here?”

The landlady at once hurried down, and, ere a moment had elapsed, a step bounded up the stairs, rushed into the room, and Mary was in the arms of Hardy.

Unutterably sweet, beyond description, blissful, was the meeting. If, in the every-day meetings of those two beings, there had been joy and happiness before, what must have been the luxury of this one! So long and estranged, so entirely divided, so hopelessly miserable and desponding. Oh! it was a blessed night of joy, and thankfulness, and rapture. After his daily experience of intense thought, anxiety, and fear, this was a rich reward. Alone with her he loved so wholly and entirely, when neither spy nor foe could intrude between

them, he gave himself up to the most unmixed and perfect happiness. Her heart, so long depressed and weary with care and heaviness, exulted with delight at the sight of one so dear ; and, for many minutes, everything was forgotten, but that *he* was come.

The tidings he brought were not of unpleasant import. Her cousin had left Ireland, and joined her uncle at Bulstrode. The old man was not worse, and had borne his journey better than could have been expected. He had sought for, and procured, a home for Mary, such as she had wished for. He said but little of his personal cares and sufferings, but he looked as if he had encountered many. He had to assure her of the warm sympathy, and kind exertions in her behalf, of his Aunt Sutton, and of the unchanged devotion of his own loving heart. She said—

“And you are come to emancipate me from this horrible confinement, this imprisonment? How kind—how very kind!”

“Yes, dearest, and I am come to take care of you.”

She smiled, and shook her head. She said—

“Ah ! no, you are come to direct me ; you

are come to put me in the way of journeying to my new home; that I must do by myself—I need no care for that.”

“Yes, but you do, Mary; you will have a long journey both by sea and land, and must not undertake it by yourself. No, no! there is no need for that now. I can, without risk of suspicion, remain with you till I place you in safety. I am determined on that point. You need not think that I am going to let you have your own way in everything; I have made up my mind.”

Another smile, and another shake of the head.

“Ah! we won’t quarrel now, my dear William; time will settle that point in my favour. You know it would not be right, and, when you do know that, you will be the last person in the world to propose our travelling together. But, never mind, leave that for another consideration. Tell me where I am to go, and to whom?”

“To Scotland, dearest—as you yourself wished—to be a companion to an elderly lady of wealth and station, but who lives in entire seclusion, totally away from the world. Your

duties, I trust, will not be heavy ; but, as she is a lady, I trust she will not forget your being one, and deal lightly with you. Strict inquiries were made about you, and my aunt, through the medium of a friend, was referred to, and her opinion regarding you decided the matter.

“ And when am I to go ? ”

“ As soon as possible. I shall arrange that, and all the necessary details of your journey. In fact, Lady Brierly is very anxious to have you at once. I believe she is a little bit of an oddity—but we can't have everything. The principal advantage in the matter is, that you will be in a very lonely, district of Scotland, and never have a chance of being seen, or known.”

“ That is everything. I don't care how odd and queer she may be, or how dull and lonely all about me may be, provided I have a certainty of privacy and freedom. I need not care how dull the place is, or how strange, for I shall never see anyone.”

“ Excepting *sometimes*, when *somebody* may surprise you, dearest ; as your brother, I shall use my privilege to look after you. I see it

won't do to leave you unwatched. For instance, those officers I met, 'trying to get another peep at the most beautiful face in the world,' as they call it. They were old friends of mine, and nearly caught me coming to this house, to-day. There they were, revelling in their impudence, staring and watching, and then telling me all their plans and schemes to out-general your old landlady. I was obliged to laugh, and join their drollery, when, in my heart, I could have horsewhipped them separately and collectively. So, you see, Mary, I have some reason to be watchful. You must let me stay with you, and accompany you to Scotland; I shall be miserable, if you do not."

"I cannot, I cannot!" said Mary, as she cast down her eyes under his passionate gaze. "You must not make me unhappy, by asking what I must refuse."

"But why, Mary, must you refuse? I ask for nothing but what a brother would insist upon—a right to see you placed in safety and honourable keeping."

"Oh! be silent, William, I entreat you. I have your pledge to be all that I desire. My object, and desire is to be blameless in all

things, giving no occasion for any one hereafter to utter a breath of suspicion against me. Even your Aunt Sutton would be astonished and displeased did I permit you to accompany me. What would this old Lady Brierly say, if I went to her under your protection."

"Say! of course, she would say it was right that your brother should be with you. She already knows me as such; I have written and said so."

"That is very wrong; and I will not lend myself to such an imposture. But, never mind, we will settle all that amicably. This happy evening must not be disturbed by any bickerings, or difference of opinion. To me, you are a brother, a very dear one—that time can never change. Forgive me, William, if I seem distrustful and unkind, unmindful of your wishes."

"Forgive you! best beloved. Ah! it is you that must forgive me for distressing you by my selfish wishes. It is not for me to forgive, Mary, whom you have never offended. My love is so deep and so engrossing that, in the consideration of it, I forget all else. But, in the assurance of the reciprocating affection

of your heart, I am happy, and I must be contented; though, at times, that is very difficult. My idolatry can be no matter of surprise to any who look upon you, and it is exalted to a perfect worship when I feel and think that you have avowed the first love of your heart to be mine, mine only."

While he spoke, in all the fervour of his unquestionable sincerity, of his devotion to her, Mrs. Lydon came up to ask Miss Humphreys if she should serve tea or supper for her friend. This interruption recalled both Hardy and Mary to a recollection of the lateness of the hour. Declining the hospitable invitation of Mrs. Lydon, and promising to return at an early hour next day, he prepared to take leave, and betake himself to the hotel where he had engaged rooms. As he turned towards her she said—

"Farewell, my beloved brother, till the morrow." She took his hand in hers, and, offered, to his salute, her cheek, with the affection of a sister, with broken words of gratitude and devotion.

It was the first time she had ever volun-

tarily given him a kind and sisterly embrace, and he felt it to his very soul, as, in a rapture of pleasure at this loosening and opening of her heart towards him, he drew her towards him, kissed both her cheeks with reverential fondness and devotion. When she looked up he was gone.

A radiant day of sunshine, and soft, balmy airs, succeeded. Mary, as usual, was up, and had breakfasted, some hours before the arrival of Hardy. Mary had her sketch-book in her hand as he entered. Taking it from her, with gentle force, he scanned it through closely and with attention. He proposed that she should accompany him to some shaded walk, and carry the book with her. The want of a bonnet was a drawback; but Mrs. Lydon volunteered to go and purchase one—so that difficulty was soon over-ruled. After its arrival, which was immediate, the young people did not long remain in the house, but sallied forth,—he carrying the sketch-book, she feeling confidence and security in the protecting arm that she leaned on. As they walked along, leaving the town far behind them, he looked upon her with eyes so full of

affection, that the tears stood in hers ; but she tried to laugh them off, and withdrew from the support of his arm, as she sauntered slowly up a hill. He would not permit that, but caught the fugitive hand, and, locking it in a strong grasp, held it as they walked on.

“Tell me, beloved,” he said, “could you forget me?—could you, if you were free to wed as your heart dictated, could you forget me?”

“Do not ask me,” she replied.

“Nay, but I must.”

She looked at him with wistful eyes, in which he read a thousand blessed, happy answers to his wishes and his hopes.

“Ah, my own precious one, though you speak not as my heart yearns to hear you, I dare not doubt you, I dare not fear your truth. My soul clings to you, believes in your faithfulness. You will yet be mine, mine only, and for ever. For this time, this happy day, you are all my own ; and, when you leave this place, I will follow you. Yes, my beloved, I will hover round and about your path—I shall haunt your footsteps

whether you will or not. This little, faithful heart, that I covet to possess, shall beat for me, and me only, till the time shall come when it shall rest upon mine for ever."

Mary stopped; they had gained an eminence which commanded a wide, unbroken view of the heaving ocean, as it sparkled in the sunbeams. She seated herself, and, half unconsciously, opened the sketch-book, which he had carried; her eye scanned the wide extent of water that stretched far away before her; she was about to raise her pencil, and depict the scene, when he snatched the book, and, flinging the pencil far away, said—

"You will have plenty of time to sketch when I am far away from you. It is unkind to cheat me of the little time which ought to be my own."

And she replied, in a voice that thrilled to his heart—

"Oh! but, though I sketched, perhaps, the scene before us, it was but that, hereafter, when you are not near to me, I might look upon it, and recal the happy hour in which it was done, and the dear companion that shared that hour. Oh! do not think that I am not

contented with the enjoyment of to-day—an enjoyment full, perfect, and delicious.”

Hardy sat at her feet. The smooth turf green, and over-grown, here and there, with patches of tangled bushes and wild plants, surrounded them on every side. Still, as if rocked to sleep by its own undulating motion, lay the Atlantic. Here and there, in the distance, cottages gemmed the inland view, in the distance lay the town. Both Mary and her companion sat uninterruptedly gazing on the beauties of nature, so profusely scattered around them; his hand held hers, as he almost whispered—

“Mary, the very atmosphere about you worships you, as its breezes fan your brow and cheek. How can I live if separated from you? You are not mine own; all my intense love, and your returning affection can not make you mine, until I have won you from the heartless, haughty man, that names you as his wife. Tell me, my beloved, by what power can I annihilate his claim—how can I wrest you from him—when can I hope for happiness on earth?”

“Name not the barriers that separate us,

William—Oh ! you know not how I loathe and abhor them.”

“ And why own them, why permit yourself to be enslaved by them, my Mary ? Why not give me the right to succour and protect you ? No tie of such an unholy kind, as the one that unites you to your proud, heartless cousin, is binding in the eyes of God or man . Cast the false burthen off you ; assert your free born prerogative to marry whom you please. Let not your lot be loveless and unloved, my own dear and beloved one ; hearken to me, God grant you may be persuaded to your good and happiness.”

“ Hush, William ! you are cruel, very cruel thus to tempt me.”

“ Oh ! Mary, all that I say is right, and practicable ; I implore you by the love you bear me, to believe me.”

“ It makes me very wretched, William, to find you thus advocating a monstrous crime. My dear friend, do not listen to the temptings of unholy will ; though I, myself, can never recognize the tie which selfish pride has bound me with, I never will, or can, consent to wed another while my cousin lives. The thoughts

of my affliction burn my heart, and scorch my brain; my bosom quivers with the fearful agony, that the miserable union has entailed upon me—that dreadful lot forced upon me unwittingly. Nevertheless, I will bear it ‘in honour and honesty;’ the good fame that a woman cannot exist without, braces me to the struggle. The time may come when death will dissolve the yoke, should it, believe me the hand is ready to be pledged to the faith of the heart’s affections, so long your own.”

“ Ah! Mary, your love is cold, and calm, and common-place compared to that which burns my heart; did you feel half the fervour of the passion that enthralls me, I would not ever leave you. My dear, dear Mary, love pure as ours is a holy and blessed thing; when it enters into minds disciplined by stern fate, as ours are, it never can be eradicated, it becomes the absorbing interest of the whole existence. Away from this land of trial and suffering, we shall be at rest, no fear, or danger, or suspicion will assail us. Across that majestic ocean at which we are now looking, there is freedom and happiness for us. The new

world is open to us ; liberty and an eternal union are ready for us—peace and contentment wait for us.”

“No, William, ‘there is no peace for the wicked,’ and wicked we should be, if we dared approach the altar of the Lord, and take vows upon us, swearing, in the sight of heaven, that no just cause or impediment existed, why we should not be joined together. Beware of lending an ear to the besetting sin of your heart, my brother.”

“And you, yourself, Mary, can you be happy without me? can you forget my pain, and toil, and loneliness?”

“No, you have pryed too deeply into my heart to believe that possible. The sight of love has opened to you, every sentiment of my breast. You know, William, that for myself, I am weary of life ; day after day rolls by, and my heart remains dull and sick. You can read my soul as you please. I read none but yours ; I see at a glance every stir of your love to me, it should be so, too, with you.”

“And, if I saw your love was equal to mine, I should force you to your own happiness, and make you cast your empty fears to

the wind. There can be no peril in our being united—I stake my life upon the result. Let us fly to America, we can with ease and safety do so, from this very harbour. Once there, we will be married, and how completely happy shall we be. Oh! Mary, be mine, and let us go.”

“No, no, William, it cannot be; if we could sever conscience from our breast, and heaven from our hopes, it might be, but not otherwise.”

“You think you read my thoughts, but you do not, Mary; listen to me, I will not obey your will and wishes, I will not tamper with our mutual happiness, you shall be my wife.”

“No, William, you will not act ungenerously now, I know you will not; your continuing thus to urge me is unkind; you must cease this useless arguing. It is impossible for me to act as you have mentioned. Once for all, if you continue in this mood there can be no more communion or intercourse between us. I should cease to regard you as one anxious to promote my welfare and happiness. Come, let us forget

this painful matter ; let us remember the happiness of the present, and trust with humble reliance for a brighter future. See, the shadows begin to lengthen ; we have forgotten time, and must not longer linger here."

And, as she spoke, she rose to proceed homeward. He, too, stood up ; but he was disturbed in mind, and vexed at her firm and decided rejection of his offer. He followed her in silence down the hill ; the whole scene round and about them was unchanged, and as lovely as when, in the earlier part of the day, they had trod the same path ; but to him all seemed altered and dashed with dullness. The air was as fresh—the fields as lustrously green—the bay glittered as brightly as it did before in the same sunshine ; but his heart refused to recognize them as the same ; and he saw neither beauty nor glory in the scenery ; he felt nothing but an aching disappointment in his breast. Before they reached the town, however, he took her arm and placed it in his ; still, however, preserving an unbroken silence.

Mrs. Lydon had prepared a dinner for the friend of her lodger, expecting that, on their return home, he would share it with Miss

Humphreys. At first he seemed determined not to remain, and stood some time with his hat in his hand, as if ready to depart; but second thoughts induced him to change his mind; and Mary found him her companion at the dinner-table. For a long time the soothing powers of her voice, never before disregarded, had no effect on his mood. He was cold, and almost harsh in what he said. He might have left her, in his ill-humour, but that she asked him to give her an accurate account of the route she was to travel, and to name the time that it was necessary to start on it. His answers were at first short and unsatisfactory; but he could not long withstand the influence of the sweet voice and gentle manner that sought for his help and advice. Little by little, the tenderness of his own manner, and his affectionate disposition, conquered the demon of disappointed self-will, and he was himself. But the forbidden subject was avoided, and carefully repressed. He intended, he said, to arrange all things for her departure, before he left her; and advised her to hasten the necessary preparations for her journey as soon as possible. He asked her when she thought she

could be ready ; and she replied that she could be so within a fortnight. She had many things to get ; for, in fact, she had nothing, excepting the few essential articles of clothing, which Mrs. Lydon had purchased for her, ready made. However, she did not doubt that, by the same efficient agency, her simple wardrobe could be got ready in that time. It was then settled that she should leave Galway by sea ; and, though her journey to Scotland would be more circuitous, it would be a safer one, and less subject to suspicion than any other route. The evening passed away in uninterrupted quietness, and sober enjoyment. For, with all his exertions, Hardy could not raise his spirits to the pitch of happiness that they had been in the morning. His mind was as dull and heavy as the prospect from the window of Mary's little sitting-room, that night. All was dark outside, and in his breast. He gazed forth on the night, long and often, before he could say 'good night ;' he felt vexed with himself, humiliated, and disappointed. There were several stars over head, though the clouds looked angry and lowering. The sea had a leaden hue stretching

over its whole expanse, as if from a vast depth below, up to the very sky. Dim and soundless lay its waters. At length, it was time, he felt, to be gone. He said—ere he did so—

“Mary, forgive me!”

Her ready hand was at once extended with the tenderest smile, and most winning affection; she said—

“Can you suppose you have not been forgiven long ago? Ah! William, you should not be angry with my decision. Can you suppose that I do not feel your disinterested generosity fully and deeply? and that it tears my heart asunder to wound your affection? But, my dear brother, if you love me, never again breathe wishes such as those that to-day have caused our first disunion. I must not—dare not—listen to them. To-morrow you will judge more calmly on what has passed, and feel less bitterly against me. Till then, good-bye, dear brother—good night.”

“Well, then, beloved, in the certainty of your full and perfect forgiveness, I leave you for to-night; but for that certainty it would break my heart to leave you, knowing that I had caused you pain.”

He embraced her tenderly, and left her.

She could hear a wild burst of laughter as the door closed after Hardy; she could discern his voice arguing and entreating, and boisterous shouts in reply, from her old tormentors, who, pursuing their usual practice of watching Mrs. Lydon's house, had discovered Hardy leaving it. They had missed him all the day; and had been in pursuit of him in every direction; now they rose upon him in wild mirth; quizzing him unmercifully. At first he was inclined to be very angry, and resent the conduct of the officers; but, for Mary's sake, he suppressed his feelings, and endeavoured to laugh off the matter.

"A pretty fellow comè among us!" said a young ensign, "poaching on our preserves; caught in the very fact. What must we do to him?"

"Compel him to divulge who and what the beautiful incognita is; and to what cause we may attribute his visit to her," said another.

"Agreed," replied the first military admirer of Mary. "Hardy must be compelled to make a clean breast. An open confession he must make, and that before supper to-night."

“Give me breathing time, then,” replied Hardy, walking off, from the neighbourhood of Mrs. Lydon’s house, as rapidly as possible, followed by the merry group. He was willing to brave any amount of raillery, so that he drew off his companions’ attention from Mary. He succeeded admirably ; deluding the whole party with a feigned tale, which amused them so much, that, at length, he was permitted to leave the barracks to which he had been obliged to go ; and promising to dine at the mess next day, was allowed to leave them, and retire to rest, at an early hour in the morning.

For a whole happy fortnight, Hardy remained in Galway. The preparations for Mary’s journey were made as rapidly as possible, by, and through Mrs. Lydon’s activity and assistance. It was very hard to evade the curiosity and annoying espionage of the officers, who continued to watch and quizz him most unmercifully, and each day claimed him as a captive, and carried him off to mess. Still, there were many happy mornings devoted to Mary ; there were long delightful walks and rambles to distant places ; there were

no more differences or disagreements ; there was perfect and unchecked confidence and reliance on his part and confiding, trusting affection, on hers.

CHAPTER III.

“ And drags, at each remove, a lengthening chain.”

It would add very little to the interest of the reader, were we to enter into a geographical detail of the journey planned by Hardy, for Mary to undertake. A Scotch collier, at the time unloading in the town, was fixed upon as one of the means by which she was to leave Ireland ; and, though the voyage would be a very long, tedious, and wearing one, it would the better screen her from all suspicion, and offer the safest course that could be adopted. Her arrangements were few, and quickly made. By the help of Mrs. Lydon she disposed of her

gold chain, and was enabled to purchase the necessary things that she required, of the plainest description. During the short time that intervened until the sailing of the collier, Hardy remained in Galway, to assist and direct the preparations.

Never, in the whole course of his life, was he so sorely tried, as by the continued refusals of Mary, to receive assistance of a pecuniary kind from him. He was in a terrible state of agitation and vexation, and she found it a difficult task, nay, an almost impossible one, to reason with him on the subject. But she remained firm and fixed in her resolution.

The parting was eminently painful. It awoke the most agonizing sensations, never to be forgotten. He struggled hard to preserve the semblance of those brotherly feelings, which she required of him, and to smother the demonstrations of the tender, uncontrollable passion, which burned within his breast. He said, they were almost his last words—

“Rest assured, Mary, that I shall never be far from you, never so far, but that, at your slightest wish, I shall fly to you.”

She tried to smile, but could not, her heart

was very heavy. Her tears gushed forth, nor was she ashamed to permit them to do so, even before the good Mrs. Lydon, for were they not as brother and sister? She held out her hand to bid farewell, but he rejected it, and taking her to his arms, pressed her to his heart with passionate fervour, kissing her with profound tenderness. It seemed as if the flood-gates of his own heart were opened too, so bitterly did his tears pour forth. He had no power to resist the womanly emotion; his fortitude was gone, utterly gone. She tore herself away from him; and so they parted.

When she got on board the ship, everything was forgotten, unnoted, uncared-for by her, and Mrs. Lydon departed from her without her being aware of it. How bitter was the commencement of this journey!—how dreadful the separation it entailed from one so wholly and entirely her own as Hardy was! Whichever way she turned, it seemed to her that she beheld his sorrowing figure and woe-struck countenance. She almost felt that she would return, and recal to her side the being she left so miserably wretched. But little by little, the good little craft, that bore her, fell

off from the shore—at first imperceptibly, then, by degrees, faster and faster, till it floated out clear of the harbour into the broad expanse of waters. The shore faded from her straining sight, till nothing met her view but the mighty Atlantic round and about her.

Again alone on the world—utterly alone. No one near to care for or help her. The one dearer now to her than life had been cast off, and left behind, with, perhaps, mistaken feelings as to her affection towards him. The thought was dreadful. She crept down to the cabin, steadying herself by the stout arm of the captain's wife, for the motion of the vessel had become very great. Seating herself on the side of her berth, she leaned her head on her arms, and gave herself up to the deepest and most mournful thoughts. Her tears fell thick and fast; nature would have its tribute, and relieve her almost bursting heart.

The captain of the collier was a bluff, honest old man, interested for his passenger, as she was a friend of Mrs. Lydon, whose son had been his chief assistant in the ship years before. His wife, the only female on board, was decent and respectful, and kindly assist-

ing Mary into her berth, left her to herself, comparatively calm, at an early hour of the night.

The voyage was a very long one. At first, the weather was calm and fine, but afterwards it became stormy and wet. The ship proceeded on its way, notwithstanding the roughness of the elements. Life on board ship is always monotonous, sometimes very disagreeably so; but Mary did not mind it: everything seemed equal to her. The wind continued high for some days, but suddenly it increased its power and violence, and the captain was obliged to lie by, fearing to be driven upon shore. For some hours he had to remain so, but as the storm abated for awhile, he again set sail. The waves ran mountains high, and the wind blew with such extreme fury, that it exceeded all description. The water broke over the ship continually, and sometimes struck her with the violence of an earthquake, causing her to stop, and stagger, and reel like a drunken being. Night drew on, and it promised to be one of great anxiety to all in the ship; for she was frequently under water to leeward as far as the hatches.

With very little intermission, the weather continued fearfully boisterous ; but the captain continued hopeful of weathering out the gale until the third day of its continuance. The whistling of the storm through the rigging made a noise as if the demons of hell were shrieking through it ; the sea and sky seemed to be blended together. The night was black as ink, rendered sometimes fearfully luminous by the vivid flashes of forked lightning, that constantly burst from the heavens, dazzling and perplexing the sight of the anxious and agitated seamen. The weight and force of the waves dashed against the sides of the vessel, threatened to overwhelm her every moment, and kept her in such a fearful position, that all on deck were led to fear she would upset. But, happily, towards morning the storm suddenly ceased, the clouds cleared rapidly away, a light and favourable breeze enabled the vessel to pursue her course, and at the end of two days it arrived safe, out of all its perils and dangers, at its destination.

As soon as the captain had moored his worthy little craft in safety, and had a little time to himself, he offered to escort Mary into the

town close to the bay where they had arrived, and make arrangements for the continuation of her journey. He had been instructed by Hardy himself as to the route to be pursued, so that he was able to judge how best to order it.

It was a great relief to Mary to find herself once more on land, after the sufferings of a three weeks' voyage in a close and confined cabin of a ship of only three hundred tons. She was about to reimburse the captain and his wife for her expenses, but she found that in this one thing she had been successfully outwitted, and that Hardy had amply defrayed all charges that could possibly be made upon her.

Her first care was to procure a conveyance to the nearest railway station; but as she could not immediately get one, she determined to seek the shelter of a respectable inn, till the matter could be effected. An hour elapsed before this could be done. At last she set off, and arrived just in time to catch the last train to Edinburgh. Before she reached that town, night had come on, and she was glad to hurry to the enjoyment of a

quiet rest. The next morning, with the early day, she was up, and once more on her way. This day her journey was conducted by various modes of travelling—railways, stage-coaches, ferry-boat, and at last, for the winding up, a spring-cart was found ready to carry her to her new home, where she did not arrive till after nine o'clock at night, quite fagged and worn out. By the faint light of the moon, Mary could discern that the house she was approaching was an ungainly building, rude, staring, uninviting, with a thatched roof. As she drove up to the dwelling, several ferocious dogs rushed out, and began to bark violently. On the opening of the door to admit her, she observed that the hall, through which she passed; was rude and unfurnished, with a very cheerless and unwelcoming appearance. The female servant, who ushered her in, was a large, coarse-looking woman, with a flat nose and a very forbidding countenance. She looked at the stranger with a glance of impertinent curiosity; and, without a word of welcome, preceded her to a door, which she opened, admitting her into a large, low room, occupied by an old and venerable-looking woman, to whom she said—

“My leddy, here is the young woman.”

The occupant of the room looked up, over a pair of spectacles, and, regarding the stranger with inquisitive earnestness, said—

“Your name is—”

“Humphreys, madam.”

“Ah, yes! Humphreys—all right. You met the spring cart, did you, in time?”

“Yes, madam.”

“How did you come to where the cart met you?”

“I arrived, by ship, in Scotland yesterday; and, by rail and ferry-boat, came on to the place you appointed.”

Oh, yes! I wrote to your brother all about it; I suppose he showed you my letters.”

Mary blushed, but continued to falter out—

“No! he only told me what you said.”

“That is not right. I said, or rather wrote a great deal that it was necessary for you to be told. How much did it cost for you to come here?”

“I really cannot tell you, madam.”

“Cannot tell me—humbug! How will you expect me to pay your expenses if you can’t account to me for them?”

"I never expected you would pay them, madam. I should be sorry to tax your generosity so far; therefore it cannot be of any import what my journey cost me."

"Very true. I don't care if you don't charge them; but, in my letter to Humphreys, your brother, I said I would pay you up to me, provided the charge was moderate, and in reason."

"I never heard of the offer, and never would dream of claiming it."

"Well, that is settled; so, now, tell me how old you are, and where you come from?"

"My age is of very little consequence, madam; I am some time over twenty, and my life has been so unsettled that I hardly possess a home."

"Your father—where is he?"

"Dead, madam."

"And your mother?"

"Dead, also."

"So much the better. Is your brother married?"

"No, madam."

"Then you certainly have no settled home."

You must make up your mind to remain in your place steadily and quietly. I allow no roaming or company-keeping. My house is an orderly, regular one, and I never keep anybody that is not industrious and satisfied to remain within. Sit down there, that I may look at you. You can read well, can't you?"

"Yes."

"And are handy and industrious at your needle, I believe. My sight is bad, and I keep a companion chiefly to read to me, and work for me. You will have an easy time of it—little, or nothing, to do, but attend to me, and make yourself generally useful. My tea is over long ago; so, I suppose, you don't want anything till supper."

"No, madam, nothing."

And, as the poor girl spoke, she sighed, for she felt miserable. The old lady said, as she handed her a thick octavo volume of 'Pitt's Speeches'—

"Open that, and let me hear how you read."

Mary did so, and, commencing a chapter of the dry, uninteresting matter, read it to the end. Lady Brierly said—

“Oh, go on, you read very well; I am satisfied, quite so. You may as well read till supper comes in.”

And so the tired, weary girl read on and on, till she could hardly support the book, so fatigued was she. At last, a thin, gaunt footman, in a faded, shabby livery, opened the door, and announced ‘supper.’ The speech in which Mary was engaged was of such interest to the old politician, that she took no notice of the signal till it was completed. Then she rose, and, directing Mary to follow her, swept majestically out of the room into an adjoining one, dimly lighted.

The lady seated herself at the head of the table, and signed to her companion to do so at the side. Grace was said, and the meal commenced. There was a large cheese, some broiled fish, a huge loaf of coarse bread—that was all. Mary declined to have anything but bread, of which she helped herself to a little piece. Lady Brierly eat heartily of the fish, and then of the cheese, liberally flavouring a tumbler of water with a large modicum of whiskey. She offered Mary the bottle of spirits, but it was declined. The cloth was

cleared away, and a jug of hot water and sugar being put down opposite the mistress of the house, she brewed herself a strong glass of toddy, which she drank with considerable gusto. She talked incessantly of her family, and again replenished her glass; so that Mary began to be alarmed, and regarded her with anxious curiosity. But the cheering liquid, which she imbibed with such manifest pleasure, seemed to take no effect. At last, she looked at her watch, and, directing Mary to lock up the spirits and sugar, lit a bedroom candle, and, extinguishing the other lights, preceded her out of the room and upstairs. A small doorway admitted the stranger into her new chamber, and, after lighting an oil lamp that stood on a table, Lady Brierly bade her 'Good night,' and left her.

Mary dropped into a chair; her first movement was to take off her bonnet, which still remained on her head; then, to clasp her hands upon her lap, and recal herself to the reality of her position. The silence, the solitude, and what she had gone through, oppressed her, and, for a few moments, she

felt almost suffocated with agitation and excitement. She longed to snatch up her bonnet again, rush down stairs, and quit the house, in which she saw before her a life of degradation, beyond what she possibly could have imagined. She turned her head to scan her room; it was a wretched one. White-washed walls, no carpet, nor curtain; a poor, miserable bed, a chair, and an uncovered table, were all that furnished it. For some minutes she sat, till the remembrance flashed across her mind, that, bare, and meagre, and humiliating as was her new home, it was a harbour of refuge—secure, unknown, and precious, because in it she was free. But her heart was full; and, in the silence and seclusion of that poor place, alone, with no witness to the emotions which her thoughts gave rise to, she shed tears for him who filled them.

The sharp tinkle of a cracked bell sounded through the house, next morning, at six o'clock—for Lady Brierly's habits were those of an early riser. Mary dressed, with but very poor assistance in her ablutions, from the scanty supply of water left to her, and the little piece of soft, yellow soap. The looking-

glass, about six inches square, made her face look quite crooked—so much so, that, at first, she imagined herself under the infliction of a violent swelling of one cheek and half her nose. When dressed, she proceeded down stairs. Lady Brierly was standing in the hall, as she came down, and did not vouchsafe to speak. She was dressed in a dark cotton gown, made something like a dressing-wrapper, opening in front, and disclosing a black stuff petticoat. She had on a knitted cap, or hood, of blue worsted, and was enveloped in a plaid shawl. She went into the room where Mary had first seen her, and, pulling the bell to summon the servants in to prayers, desired Mary to bring her the Bible and Prayer-book, and to open them at the marked pages. She did so, just as the door opened, and four domestics—two male, and two female—entered, and took their places at the end of the room. The old lady, with a nasal twang, and peculiar emphasis, read several chapters, followed by a very long prayer. After that, she delivered out a sort of homily, on the chapters she had that morning been reading—long, erudite, and very prosing. By the time she

had ended, more than an hour had elapsed. Breakfast was laid in the supper-room of the night before, and it looked very untempting indeed. On a very coarse cloth, two soup-plates of oatmeal stir-about, and two bowls of milk, were placed—that was all. Lady Brierly soon eat the greater part of her portion, but poor Mary made very poor way with hers. She had never eaten of such food, and knew nothing of it. Still, she tried, but without any success. At last, Lady Brierly told her, that if she did not like stir-about, she could have bread with her milk ; but that, as she never, herself, took tea in the morning, it would be wasteful to make it for her. Mary agreed, but made little progress in the thick slice of bread brought to her by the old lanky footman.

After breakfast, Lady Brierly brought down some work for Mary ; it was to sew together countless little squares of knitted white cotton, which, in the end, were to form a bed-quilt of large size. These squares were the constant occupation of the old lady's evening hours. She had manufactured an amazing number of them, which were now handed over for making

up into the counterpane. After many injunctions to sew them evenly and regularly, and to be sure to match corner with corner, Lady Brierly went out, to devote her morning, as she always did, to domestic arrangements and economical management.

The room called the drawing-room, was never used, except on state occasions. The dining-room was the only apartment that, in winter, possessed a fire. The third room, where the lady usually sat in summer, was the one in which she left Mary at work. It was a low, dull-looking room, with a view of the back-yard. The furniture was old and worn; a threadbare drugget only half covered the floor—discoloured, washed-out hangings to the windows—a horse-hair sofa, and a dozen old-fashioned chairs to match it, in hardness and want of comfort. There was an oval table, with drawers in it, tinned, that held tea and sugar. There were no books, excepting six volumes of ‘Pitt’s Speeches,’ and a few of ‘Rees’s Encyclopedia.’ As she looked off her work, now and then, she could see Lady Brierly rushing in and out of a back-room, ordering, scolding, threatening, and directing;

and so she stayed till dinner time, which was at one o'clock. Before this hour, the lady had thrown off her knitted cap and cotton dressing gown, and appeared in a black dress, high cauled cap, of ancient fashion, a pair of black silk mitts, and curled front of hair, very different from her own grizzled locks.

The dinner was not very elaborate. At the top there was a large piece of salt beef, with carrots garnishing it, and at the foot, a wooden bowl of potatoes, boiled with their skins on. The same loaf again garnished one side and the cheese the other. The lady carved, and sent Mary a profuse helping of beef and carrots, sufficiently large to have given her her dinner for a month, at least. Afterwards there came in, when the beef went out, a huge batter pudding, of tough and strong material, and ponderous size. The drink was only water for her, but Lady Brierly plentifully dashed her tumbler with alcohol, as on the previous night.

When they left the dinning-room, they went back to the other sitting-room, where Mary's work was. Lady Brierly gave her a receipt book, which she had borrowed, to copy, wholly

and entirely, into a blank one, purchased for the purpose. The task promised, from the size of the book, to be a very long one, so that Lady Brierly, according to custom, placed herself on the horse-hair sofa, and disposed herself, at once, for a sleep, which it was her daily custom to indulge in, after dinner.

She slept till four o'clock, and then rousing herself, desired Mary to fetch down her bonnet and shawl to her, then herself get ready, to accompany her, in the customary walk. It was some time before she could find where the servants were, that she might ask for the lady's bonnet, but at last she got it, and having dressed herself, followed her steps. It was Lady Brierly's custom to walk a step or two in advance, so she did, and Mary humbly went after her, at the required distance-

Lady Brierly, notwithstanding her strangeness and meanness was rich and wealthy, and was the proprietress of a very large estate, in the Highlands. She had, originally, been poor, but had married a rich old husband, who left her everything he possessed, to the injury of his daughter by a first marriage. The lady was clever, sharp, enterprising,

and though she had now entered on her sixtieth year, she was hale and healthy, and as industrious, and anxious to take advantage of every means of making money, as if she were the poorest collier on her property. Since her husband's death she had considerably extended and increased her property. Besides the estate which she lived on, she had purchased some large tracts of country, and reigned mistress, undisputedly, over, at least, ten thousand acres. Vast as her concerns were, she managed all herself; she was her own agent, steward, and manager. She had a clear head, but her sight had been for some years failing, and she found it absolutely necessary to have a companion, and assistant in her affairs. Her former one had been a good-natured, commonplace sort of woman, implicitly obedient to Lady Brierly's wishes and commands, but unfortunately, she fell in love with the bailiff on the estate, and thereby lost her patroness's favour and regard.

The day was very fine, a clear beautiful one in August. The beauty of the wild scenery through which they passed, the calmness of all around, inspired the soul of Mary with a

secret pleasure, which she did not think she possibly could have experienced, with Lady Brierly as a companion. The business of the day, with that lady, was to mark trees for cutting down. She was met by some persons, whom she had summoned for that purpose. She was quite *au fait* at the matter; she wanted no heavy timber, but slight poles, for scaffolding and burning, as she rarely used any other fuel, and that very sparingly, even in the coldest weather, and the most inclement seasons. As she busied herself at her task, Mary strolled away, into a wooded glen. So forgetful did she become of Lady Brierly, and all connected with her, and so rapidly passed the time, that she was startled by loud shouts calling out her name. Hurrying back as fast as she could, she apologized for her absence, but in reply received a rough uncourteous reprimand. They pursued their way back over fertile plains, and through splendid grain fields, till they reached the house, which, itself, was a very ugly, tasteless building, half house, half cottage, and wholly uncomfortable. There were no trees or shrubs near it, showing the poverty of the soil in that immediate district,

which, for the sake of economy, had been chosen as a site for the dwelling. It was long past seven, and tea was ready, when they arrived at home. 'It was the first meal of which Mary could partake with any relish. The 'cheering cup,' was well made, and very refreshing. There were fresh scones and delicious butter. On the removal of the tea things, the provincial paper, which had that day arrived, was handed to Mary, and until ten o'clock she read its monotonous details, without a moment's pause, being permitted, from its first advertisement, to the editor's name, in the last corner. Prayers were always read and said before tea time; they were like those of the morning, but that Mary was informed, from thenceforth the duty of reading them, devolved on her. So passed the first day in her new home. She did not see much promise of happiness in it, but she was more cheerful and resigned, on entering to her room that night, than she was on the previous one. Besides she had a task, oh! a very happy one before her, when quiet reigned through the house and all but herself were at rest, she had resolved to write to Hardy; she had promised

to do so, immediately on her arrival at her destination, and she was only too happy, when the hour for fulfilling her promise arrived. She had much to tell him; the details of her long voyage, the perils of the great storm; the adventures of her inland travels; these filled up a great portion of the letter, and left but little space for her to add anything of her uncomfortable prospects, or her own feelings; as she wrote on and on, she said—

“It struck me in the hour of our great danger, when we had no hope of riding out the gale, when the hurricane raged in its most fearful violence, and with its greatest fury, that the very superstitions of the poor sailors were to be respected, for they proceeded from a right and truthful feeling, though in a bad direction. But, as the thoughts of all sailors must be eternally stimulated, by the sublime effect that the great deep must exert over them, the poor fellows people the sun and atmosphere with imaginary omens, of either good or evil import. Do they not teach us a lesson of confidence in the power of the Almighty, and cause us to seek out the work-

ings of His will, by the dictates of conscience, and to be guided by them utterly, whether they daunt or console us, and implicitly resign ourselves to their guidance and influence. Oh, my dear William, you know that you should, with unbounded confidence, rely on the workings of that will, which it is duty to study and obey. You must believe, and rest assured, that, though the light of hope seems blotted from the hearts of both of us, it is not, in reality, so; but that, behind the dark shadow of stern fate, God's hand is still stretched out, still leading us on, with a radiance not the less bright because it is hidden from the sight and knowledge of man. Be not deceived, nor tempted by your own heart to rebel against the will of God; for that heart is naturally unholy, and it needs some bitter training before it enjoys the hopeful, trusting spirit that should rule it—before it is found meet to live in the light of God's countenance, and in His presence for ever. I have an inward consolation in abiding under the rule of conscience; and, therefore, I am not hopeless, neither, in all my solitary wanderings, am I alone—no! God is with me, to

protect, comfort, and defend me, and I am not alone. I can hardly yet judge of Lady Brierly; therefore, till my next letter, you must remain in suspense as to what she resembles. I am in a position entirely new, and do not expect that my life shall pass in the smoothness with which it glided on when with your aunt. I miss the society, and company, and occupation of the children. I am lonely, without either a good nurse, or friendly Mrs. Lydon, to look after my comforts. I miss much, and many things;—one, above all, and I will candidly own it—I miss, beyond the whole world, the protecting care, the affection, and unceasing devotion of my brother. But you have promised to be patient, and I will not tempt you to be otherwise; though I do sadly miss the benefit of your care, and advice, and affection. I would not, for the wealth of the world, that you would venture here; you must leave me as I am, and I must be contented to remain here. From my heart I thank you for the shelter and security you have provided for me. I trust I may be permitted to enjoy it as long as I require that shelter. I am pained to find

that you are really regarded here as my brother; it is a deception very painful to me. At first, I determined to assert the fact, and deny the relationship; but my heart failed, and I could not bring myself to cause discredit to fall on your assertions. I shall look for your letters, as a cordial pleasure; and shall, myself, devote my happiest hours to our correspondence. I am free, free as yet; and, therefore, at peace in mind and body. You must be content and willing to leave me so, dearest friend;—you must be glad of this, even if we are separated—and you, too, must pray, and resist temptation, allowing me to remain where duty calls me. What would become of me, were you, by venturing hither, to raise suspicions against me, and throw me again on the mercy of the world, unprotected. Farewell! With all the force of determination, and all the powers of endurance, I will, by valuing the importance of the present time, and using it, I trust, aright, endeavour to create a spirit in my heart of hopefulness for the future.”

The next morning was a busy one with Lady Brierly. She gave audience to many of

her tenants, receiving rents, considering proposals, and planning improvements. She called upon Mary, as a matter of course, to attend her, and write and cast up accounts, till her head was confused and addled. But, neither her aptitude for business, her good temper, nor her willingness to oblige, occasioned any show of kindness or consideration towards her from the hard-hearted being whom she was associated with. As the day advanced there was a slight interruption to allow Lady Brierly to dine; but, immediately after, business was renewed, and continued without intermission. As the expectation of an end to business became more distant, the manner of Lady Brierly became more unkind and morose. Some bad debts inflamed her ladyship's passion to a great extent; and she directly turned upon Mary, venting upon her all the petulancy of her ill-humour and disappointment. Unaccustomed to such treatment, her heart swelled, indignant at it, and she had some difficulty to compel herself to remain where she was, and tamely bear the ceaseless abuse which was unsparingly lavished upon her, for her ignorance respecting accounts

which she had never before seen. Heartily glad was she when the business of the day was over. Tea was served, and Mary had a hope her labours were over; but, unfortunately, such was not the case. There were many business letters to be written, from Lady Brierly's dictation, to be ready for the morning's post; and, until twelve at night, she was kept fully employed. Day after day brought no improvement, or any change, excepting on Sundays, when Lady Brierly and her companion attended church at some miles' distance.

There was a letter from Hardy. Lady Brierly kept it in her hand several minutes, turning it over and over, looking at the writing, and closely examining the seal, before she gave it to its owner. Her rudeness and impertinent inquiries, relative to it, were nearly overcoming Mary's usual quietness of demeanour. However, she did keep her temper; and, though for hours she was unable to get time to read it, she, with a joy resembling that which the sight of an old friend occasions, welcomed it as the most valued treasure she could receive.

She was indefatigable in attending to the wishes of Lady Brierly ; but, unfortunately, the more she did for that lady, the more was expected from her. The aspect of Lady Brierly, too, did not improve upon acquaintance ; nor did her manner tend to reassure her spirits or lessen her dejection. Her manners were by no means more amiable than her looks. She was eternally muttering and grumbling to herself. She was truly what might be called a ' cross-grained ' woman ; one who delighted in thwarting and disappointing all about her.

But, though kept so constantly employed and engaged, Mary was seldom permitted to enjoy a solitary walk. Lady Brierly never deemed that she could need any thing but what she had. But Lady Brierly, through over exertion, knocked herself up, and was for some days confined to her bed—a very rare and uncommon occurrence with her. Mary had read her to sleep one day, and creeping quietly down-stairs, sallied out in the luxury of being alone. The air was embalmed with fragrance, that perfectly fascinated her senses. The zephyrs rustled through the trees, and

seemed to bring health and hope to her heart. The place was utterly lonely ; and she strayed on and on, unconscious of the distance she was going.

On her return—which was not for some hours—she was received with a torrent of bitter reproaches for daring to venture away from the house without permission. Mary listened in surprise, with temper, and no reply. This aggravated the old lady still more ; and she became so loudly abusive that the poor girl, in self-defence, left the room. Though deeply hurt at being compelled to endure such treatment, she, with great self-command, reasoned herself into patience and forgiveness, and got over her disturbed feelings by the consideration that, no matter how vexatious such occurrences were, she was herself safe from all danger of pursuit ; and that alone would reconcile her to every trouble and discomfort. There were but few visitors to Lady Brierly ; she did not mix in society, and rather repelled the civilities of any of her neighbours that seemed inclined to tender them. Sometimes a lawyer, from a town a few miles away from Roughley (so was the

place named,) would come on business matters and remain a day or two with Lady Brierly. He was a man of about forty-five years of age; and possessed great influence with the old lady. His humble and deferential manner to her was very pleasing; and, in return, she placed great confidence in him, and great importance in his advice. His name was Wormley; and he was anxiously striving to strengthen his interest with Lady Brierly, imagining himself to be a person very likely to be benefited in her testamentary arrangements.

Lady Brierly had a sister, who sometimes passed a few weeks with her at Roughley. This lady had two daughters, who naturally regarded themselves as the inheritors of their aunt's wealth; and were, therefore, not averse to visiting her occasionally. Mary had heard much of them; and they were the only beings that Lady Brierly seemed to have any interest in. Still, the place was so lonely, and so very far removed from all society, that the Misses Dart and their mother very seldom found themselves domesticated for any length of time with their wealthy relative, whose penurious habits, and economical pursuits, did

not allow her to make any alteration in her usual mode of living when they were with her.

Mr. Wormley was a professed admirer of Miss Nina Dart, chiefly because he imagined her to be the favourite of her aunt. Whenever Lady Brierly invited her sister she did not forget to ask the lawyer; so that it may be inferred that she would not have been averse to the union of interests.

But, unhappily, for Miss Nina's hopes, no sooner did poor Mr. Wormley behold Mary than he felt that he completely lost his heart. Their meeting was a strange one. She had been sent by Lady Brierly with a bowl of broth to a sick tenant, some distance away from the house. She proceeded, with the bowl in her hand, and shrouded in a large bonnet, unassuming in air, and dignified in demeanour, to the place to which she had been directed. The little, miserable hut to which she went was situated on the side of a steep hill, whose sides she had to toil up with labour and difficulty. When in the middle of her journey, through a path little frequented, she encountered a stranger. He took off his hat, and stepped

back to allow the lady to pass him. Confused and surprised, Mary half bowed, and walked on her way, allowing the gentleman to look after her in surprise and astonishment, without devoting another thought to him.

On her return home, she proceeded to give an account of her visit to Lady Brierly. Her astonishment was very great, when the first object that met her glance was the stranger she had so lately encountered. She started and involuntarily recoiled, then went on in a mechanical manner to report all connected with her visit. She listened with patience to Lady Brierly's remarks, and then seeing that she was not required, left the apartment.

That evening, when tea was announced, Mary had again forgotten the stranger, and not till she entered the room, where it was laid, did she recal the remembrance of the stranger to her mind. When the parlour door was opened by her unconscious hands, she started, and would have drawn back, but for the commanding voice of Lady Brierly, which called to her, to bring in her accounts for Mr. Wormley's revisal.

Confused and surprised, Mary would have

sent in by the footman the necessary papers, but for the fear of displeasing the old lady. So she went with them herself, and presented them, without giving one thought to Mr. Wormley, who however, was stedfastly regarding her. Lady Brierly desired her to sit down at the table, and wait to be ready to give any information she might require. Mary was aware that Mr. Wormley placed the chair for her accommodation with a low bow, but that was all.

Tea came on, business again ; then supper. Mary was overpowered with compliments and attentions from Mr. Wormley. She felt that she could have gladly dispensed with them. He was a long, thin, elderly man, and spoke in a manner denoting to all his hearers allegiance to the fair sex, and adoration of whatever might be the rising star.

Early that evening Mary was permitted to retire to her own room, and enjoy the unusual luxury of an evening all to herself. The greater part of it was devoted to Hardy, to whom she wrote a long letter.

The next day confirmed Mary's vague suspicions. Wormley was more attentive than

ever. Contrary to his usual practice, he remained indoors all day, and could not get forward in any of the accounts without the assistance of the fair stranger.

Unsuspicious, however, of being the means of exciting any tender feelings in the lawyer's breast, Mary found herself more at liberty, and more free from toil and trouble, than since her arrival at Roughley. She had liberty and freedom, and was exempt from all the annoyances she had before encountered; and this lasted for many days. Mr. Wormley found more difficulties in his business than he had ever encountered before; therefore his stay at Roughley was prolonged long after its usual length.

Mary was much alone in consequence of this protracted stay of Mr. Wormley. She amused her mind, and drove away disagreeable contemplations, by work, by reading, by drawing; and when the duskiness of twilight prevented her still trying those resources, she strolled out in the open country, towards the hills.

The moon had risen one evening, silvering the scene with its mild radiance, which the

shades of night had partially obscured ; when, released from care, and attendance on Lady Brierly, she went forth to inhale the evening air. She had not been long abroad, when she discovered a figure, leaning against a tree. For a moment or two she had not power to stir, so alarmed did she become ; then she determined to approach it, and ascertain whether she was mistaken or not. On drawing close to the object, she saw Wormley, who advanced towards her.

“ I have alarmed you, I fear,” he said, as he came forward into the clear moonlight.

“ Alarmed !” she involuntarily exclaimed. “ Yes, you alarmed me, for I did not expect to meet anyone here, at this still and silent hour.”

“ Then I believe I may conclude that I should not have been favoured with an opportunity of speaking to you, had you known that I was here. I have reason to imagine so, after your studiously declining every opportunity that I offered to you, to become more closely acquainted.”

Mary stared, and was lost in astonishment at these words. At last she replied—

"How so, Mr. Wormley?"

"Oh, you must be aware yourself that I have done all that lay in my power to win your good-will. I have been here for ten days, devoting myself to the hope of winning a kindly smile, and a good word, from you. Lady Brierly is busily engaged in searching for a paper, which she believes she possesses, and which I have assured her she does; and I have taken advantage of her being so occupied, to come out and follow you—for I saw you hurrying out this evening."

The prejudices Mary had previously conceived against Wormley, were not at all removed by this speech of his; so she merely bowed, and endeavoured to pass on: but he, with an air of familiarity very disagreeable to her, stopped her, and requested her to remain a little while with him; but she did not mind him. Annoyed at such a return to his wishes, Wormley nimbly followed her, and attempted to take her hand. Pushing him away with violence, she rushed past, and hurried on to the house, in an agony of terror and alarm. When she arrived there, she detailed to Lady Brierly her fears and alarms.

However, she did not get any satisfaction in consequence of her recital. With a very angry frown, the old lady gave her plainly to understand that what she said was not worthy of attention, and that all had been the result of her own fancy.

However, the next day, Mary's ideas were decidedly confirmed, with reference to Wormley and his attentions. Forced to listen to his compliments, she briefly thanked him for his good opinion, which, she said, had induced him to bestow more thought upon her than she deserved. But her replies had but little effect on Wormley. He felt indignant at her want of feeling and gratitude, and persisted in his attentions, which were studiously and constantly rejected ; so that, in deep annoyance, Mr. Wormley left Roughley—'trusting that time might work a change in the feelings of Miss Humphreys towards him.'

With extreme joy, Mary saw Wormley's departure from Roughley. No longer fearful of interruption or annoyance, she made use of each disengaged hour, to ramble forth and enjoy the beauties of the rich autumn season. It was now the very pride and manhood of

the year, 'when the apple reddening midst its paly green, the moist pear bending on the leafy spray, the ripening grain, and all the varied foliage, proclaim the approach of that blest season of plenty and fruitfulness, that gives to man the full fruition of his toils and labours.' Lady Brierly was constantly abroad, the business of the fields, and the bustle of harvest, filled up her time and thoughts completely. Mary had more liberty granted to her than usual, and she was not slow to avail herself of it.

Mrs. Dart and her daughters came in September to Roughley. They saw, for the first time, Lady Brierly's companion; but, unfortunately, from the very first moment, she was regarded with envy and malevolence. This visit to Lady Brierly had been undertaken by the Darts without much anticipation of pleasure, but as a necessary evil. The daughters were not pleased at being hurried off to so stupid a place as Roughley, as they had wished to go, for the autumn bathing, to a delightful little spot upon the coast, which promised amusement and admiration. Inanimate objects were not those which most pleased or delighted

the Misses Dart, they were devoted to amusement, and incapable of enjoying the lovely beauties of nature which environed Lady Brierly's abode. The slighting manner in which they treated Mary was very annoying, and, after their arrival, she separated herself as much as she possibly could, from their society. The temper of Lady Brierly became almost unbearable, and she was for ever suffering under the infliction of sarcasm and abuse.

The Misses Dart were soon wearied out with the monotony of their lives at Roughley, and, after much entreaty, they prevailed on their aunt to permit them to have an evening party, the first she ever had had in her house. There was near to the estate of Roughley, a wild and romantic valley, to which it was determined to invite a pic-nic party, and afterwards entertain them at Lady Brierly's. The point was hard to be gained; at first, their aunt would not listen to the idea, but afterwards she testified some inclination to hear more of the scheme, and ultimately gave her consent to it.

Mary was fully engaged in the preparations

for this fête. She was busy from morning to night, in consequence of it. In vain did she sigh to be allowed rest and quiet; in vain did her languid step, and pale cheek, imply the necessity of care and relaxation; she was confined and restricted, and made to labour unceasingly. She determined to remain in her own room during the entertainment—a proposition which, for a wonder, was at once agreed to by Lady Brierly.

The Darts were what the generality of girls are—good-looking, fashionably-dressed, frivolous, showy, and assuming. They were tolerably educated; and had pleasing faces and good figures, with skill enough to aid the beauties of nature by those of art. At an early hour on the evening of the fête, the sitting-rooms, at Roughley, were entirely crowded with the neighbouring families. Mary sat in her own little room, far removed from the noise and flurry of the party. To try and rid herself of depressing thoughts, she crept down the back stairs and through the offices attached to the dwelling-house. The evening was cold and dispiriting as she encountered its breezes, and the night was fast glooming.

Mary was, however, heedless of all annoyances and hindrances, and walked on. She had not gone very far when she perceived Mr. Wormley hurrying after her. He was one of the pic-nic party ; and, though he had been with the Darts all the day, Mary had never heard his name mentioned, or bestowed a thought upon him ; so that his appearance was totally unexpected and unwished for. Confused and distressed beyond expression, Mary hardly recognised him, as he overtook her ; he politely inquired how she was. She coldly replied, and would have passed on, but that he prevented her, and caught hold of her dress.

“Unhand me, sir ; I insist upon it !” she said, with a proud and commanding voice, which he could not resist. He said—

“Come, come, Miss Humphreys, dispense with your airs and graces, I recommend you. I am determined to speak to you ; and you shall, without doubt, hear me.”

Her terror at the rude voice with which he uttered these words was so great, that she suddenly stopped and turned round to hear what he would say to her.

“Cold-hearted, deceitful girl, is not a guilty

conscience the cause of your alarm and nervous agitation, more than the fear of speaking to me ?”

Mary stared wildly, and with surprise ; but, without reply, he went on.

“ If I mistake not, there are causes for your nervous alarm and agitation, that you would not wish to have known. I am not without the knowledge of persons being seen prowling about Roughley, and asking questions about you.”

Mary felt as though she could sink into the earth with the shock of hearing of her being watched. However, she regained her composure after a few minutes, and walked on, as if careless of what he said.

“ You affect surprise, or rather contempt, of my information, I perceive ; therefore, I daresay, you will deny all knowledge of who the stranger is, that for the last week has been hanging about the place. But there are proofs positive of the fact. If I did rightly, I would communicate the matter to Lady Brierly ; but, for your sake, I am willing to screen it.”

“ Sir,” she replied, haughtily, “ I despise

your insinuations; I care not for your publishing any thing you please. My conduct is, I trust, beyond suspicion; and I am totally ignorant of what you allude to."

"Do you pretend to deny that you are not carrying on a secret intercourse with a gentleman who is hidden in this neighbourhood, and has been so for many days? I will not, by entering into any particulars respecting him, allow you to imagine I think you ignorant of the fact; and permit you to believe that you may deceive me into a conviction of your innocence respecting the matter."

"And is it possible, sir, that you dare to insinuate that I am not speaking the truth, when I affirm my ignorance of the affair, wholly and entirely? I repeat I do not know what you mean, that must suffice you. And I should wish to know by what authority you would intrude upon my actions, even if what you accuse me of were true?"

"By the right of loving you, which I do, and have done from the first moment I saw you, you cannot be ignorant of my feelings towards you; they have been perfectly open and undisguised; attentions such as not many

ladies would reject. Even now, my sentiments are unchanged ; and, notwithstanding, the suspicions attached to you, I am willing to overlook them, and behave with honour and generosity to you."

The effrontery of this address excited feelings of indignation, which Mary with difficulty suppressed ; but of what avail would it be for her to give utterance to them, except to provoke further impertinence ? Alike disgusted and incensed, she would have hurried away, but he prevented her. He continued—

"Do not be angry, and do not impute to any unhandsome motive what I have said to you. I have long wished to be on friendly and intimate terms with you ; that you know very well ; and, of course, feeling for you as I do, I consider myself privileged to question and advise you."

Mary still endeavoured to master her feelings of anger, while she was hesitating how to express herself sufficiently strongly to mark her indignation at his conduct. He snatched her hand, which was trembling with agitation, and began to utter some tender exclamations.

She drew back at once from him ; and, on his becoming more urgent for her to answer his entreaties, she burst into tears ; and said—

“ I presume, sir, that you think you can with impunity take advantage of my dependant position. But you judge wrongfully ; I have friends that will not permit me to be thus insulted. Leave me, sir, I command you ! ”

“ Commands come well from you, who are little better than a servant to me, Miss Humphreys, who am an independent gentleman ; and whose attachment to you, you might well look upon as an honour. I am not ashamed or afraid to declare myself attached to you. I shall patiently await your time, if you give me any hope to hold by. Your lowly position makes no difference to me ; I can afford to place my wife on a level with the best in the country ; so take time to consider of my proposal, I advise you.”

Terror and anger alike pervaded the bosom of Mary at this determined declaration ; suddenly she turned from him ; and, rushing away, hurried with fleet and rapid steps to the house, which she reached breathlessly. Pausing for a moment, she was aware that some one

was following close after her. Of course, she could only imagine it to be Wormley in pursuit; but a second glance showed her a tall, athletic figure, muffled in a boat-cloak, who in vain endeavoured to reach her before she entered; but, fleet as a bounding deer, she flew into the hall, and up to her own room; where, in an agony of fear, she locked her door, and threw herself, totally overcome, upon her bed.

Her first idea was that Harold had traced, and was diligently watching her. Nothing, she determined, should tempt her out of an evening again, after what occurred, or give any cause to the impertinent curiosity of Wormley to encourage him in the thought that she had clandestine meetings with anyone. Then she fancied that, perhaps, it was Hardy, who, true to his avowed determination of being near her, though unseen, had been wandering round and about Roughley, and having been seen by the lawyer, had been an object of suspicion. The latter idea became stronger each time she thought over it, and she imagined that it certainly was him, whom she had seen following her, though, strange to say, that had never occurred to her at the time.

Mary slept but little all that night; she had been totally forgotten in the unwonted bustle and excitement of the party, after her services in helping to prepare for it were no longer needed.

The next day there was much business to be done—many letters to be written. Mary, as usual, was summoned to her post as amanuensis, and, to her very great annoyance, she found Mr. Wormley her companion and director in the task. She avoided looking at him, and did not reply to anything that he said. On Lady Brierly's leaving the room to fetch some papers which were required, he availed himself of the opportunity to speak, and again reiterate his proposals. He continued to torment her, and would not give over doing so, he said, until he had her reply; so, with marked contempt in her tone, she said to him—

“No time can or will change my feelings with reference to you, sir. On your own account, I entreat you to forbear annoying me any further; and, to speak with sincerity, I must confess I deem myself degraded beyond expression, at being forced to listen to you.”

His rage was excessive, but the return of Lady Brierly prevented his being able to give it vent. Mary contrived shortly after to leave them, and in her own room silently bewail the horror of being exposed to annoyances of so contemptible and degrading a character. However, the affair did not rest here, for Wormley, perfectly infatuated about Mary, laid his cause before Lady Brierly, and she, with unusual good temper, promised to assist his wishes, and bring the young lady to reason.

The garden sloped down to a sort of shrubbery, dividing the house quarter from the farm-yard, and hither Mary only dared to walk, fearing to meet anyone who might be (in accordance with Wormley's declaration) in quest of her. With an eye of apprehension, she kept continually looking round and about her, whenever she ventured out, after the evening in which she had been pursued. For days there appeared nothing to alarm her, and in vain she tried to assure herself that there was no danger, and no cause of fear; she could not succeed in repressing her emotion of terror and affright. Trying to maintain

a mastery over her feelings, she devoted all her energies to employing her mind on the duties which were laid upon her. She knew not what to think of Hardy's unusual silence; for he had not written to her for three weeks—and while she thought over the matter, the idea constantly would arise in her mind, that the stranger reported to be lurking about the grounds, and who had pursued her, in her flight, from Wormley, must be he. As time, however, crept on, her confidence in the fact that whoever the person watching her might be, it decidedly could not be any myrmidons from Bulstrode, began to revive, and she allowed herself additional license in the extension of her rambles.

The scornful sneers and taunting observations of Lady Brierly and her nieces were continuous and unrelaxing. If the weeks which Mary had passed at Roughley, before the arrival of the young ladies, were unhappy, each succeeding one after was more so, so pointed and so malicious were the rudenesses she met with. In no way were her feelings spared. In truth, Lady Brierly at first did not venture to the lengths she did afterwards,

for self-interest was her governing principle, and she had too many specimens of her companion's usefulness and talent, to run the risk of disgusting her entirely with her situation ; but when she found uncomplaining patience, and untiring energy, she gave way to her inclinations and domineering disposition, and joined her nieces in all sorts of persecutions and annoyances.

Mr. Wormley had proposed to Lady Brierly to give up his general business for a suitable remuneration, and become her agent and manager, consenting even to reside with her, if Mary would be his wife. Now the old lady was very glad at this. Her strength was unable to bear up against her constant toil and exertion ; her mind had wearied of business details, and her sight was fast failing. Under these circumstances, she hailed a plan which promised to combine so much comfort to herself, and so much consequent relaxation. She knew Wormley to be a good, energetic man of business, anxious for her favour, and devoted to her will. He would conduct, under her direction, all her farming arrangements ; and as she found him always close and niggardly

in his ideas, she did not fear any overthrow of her economical plans. Mary's attendance on her, and assistance were invaluable, and the more the old lady pondered over the arrangement, the more satisfied she became with it, and the more determined she was that a marriage should take place, and cement her plans and convenience.

A task of work, little suited to the delicate fingers of Mary, had been completed one morning, and Lady Brierly not feeling very well, dispatched her companion to the farm yard with a message of some importance. With a heart heavy and a sickening feeling of fatigue and weariness, she set off. She walked slowly through the shrubbery, and had nearly reached the end of it, when she perceived her progress impeded, she raised her dejected eyes, and encountered those of Hardy.

With a faint exclamation of surprise and delight, she instantly sprang forward to him. Comforted, appeased, delighted at the unexpected sight, Mary's feelings could not be suppressed; those feelings of attachment and affection that engrossed her whole heart. And she exclaimed, as he clasped her to his heart in unspeakable rapture—

“Oh ! what joy to see you, what happiness to meet you. Now that I do behold you, how could I bear up with our separation ?”

As for him, language can but faintly convey an idea of his feelings. When, at length, the first emotions had subsided, he could, with some little composure, look upon her, as his arm encircled her, and gaze upon that idolized countenance, and revel in the pure smile of fascination which dimpled her flushed and exquisitely moulded cheek, while her deep dark eyes received his looks of love, with all the confiding affection that beamed from them. His questions, then, were long and many. Her answers were guarded so as not to make him unhappy, with the knowledge of her degraded state and miserable position. He told her how, for more than a fortnight, he had been wandering in the neighbourhood of Roughley, having, on the pretext of shooting, engaged part of a small farm house, within a few short miles. Day after day he had rambled as close to the house as safety would permit, and even, one evening, had seen her flying, as if in alarm, past him, as he lay concealed, attracted by the noise and mirth of a party,

and hoping to catch a glimpse of her as she mingled in the crowd. He had in vain pursued her, not venturing to raise his voice, and say who thus alarmingly followed her. With all the eloquence of fervent love did he implore her to permit him to go to her at Roughley House, and as her brother, enjoy the happiness of even one day's society. He dared not attempt to do so, without her permission, for it has been one of her stipulations, that he never would in a feigned name and pretended relationship, give occasion for any suspicions to rest disparagingly upon her. She could not, and would not lend herself to the deception, innocent as he might think it to be.

She earnestly entreated him to respect her wishes, and not again press the point so difficult to be refused, yet so very necessary. She assured him again and again that absence was only the means of preserving her love and devotion to him; she implored him to consider the injury that his appearance would do her in the eyes of the lady of the house, and urged him, with all the tender fervour of love, to leave the neighbourhood, where, already, he

had been seen and watched. The bell of the farm yard recalled her to herself, and to the necessity of hurrying back, however it was impossible to part thus, and she consented to meet him the next day, as soon as Lady Brierly betook herself to her afternoon's sleep. The footsteps of the farm labourers on their way to dinner being heard approaching the path where they stood, there was only time for a hurried embrace, and a few fond words, an earnest gaze of devoted love, and he, plunging through a thicket, disappeared, while she bent her steps in the direction of her errand.

Lady Brierly was very cross at dinner, therefore, Mary had not much peace. After the removal of the cloth the old lady required the answer to her message, of which Mary had been the bearer to the farm yard. The replies were neither as clear nor as satisfactory as were expected, and, therefore, the wrath of Lady Brierly was increased. She found fault with the length of time she had stayed away, and from one thing to another branched off into varied fault finding, on different matters, till at last she reverted to Mr. Wormley and his proposal,—she said—

“A creature like you, without a farthing, to reject such an offer as Mr. Wormley’s, when situated as you are, you ought to go down on your bended knees, and thank any one, barely able to give you a shelter, that proposed for you.”

Mary seeing some answer was necessary, replied, “It would be a bad requital to any one, who had the generosity of asking me to become his wife, to marry him if I disliked him, for convenience sake.”

“Nonsense, don’t give me any of your romantic stuff. I am sure you must have some one else in your head or you would jump at this offer of Mr. Wormley’s, made with my sanction.”

“Not if I were perishing,” replied Mary, angrily, and with a haughty glance, as she regarded the odious woman who thus gloried in her power of tormenting her—“not if I were perishing, would I look upon Mr. Wormley with any feeling but that of disgust. It is useless, madam, for you to speak further on the subject, for I am decidedly opposed to it.”

“‘Decidedly opposed to it!’—what pretty language to use to me, indeed! And pray,

miss, how long do you think you are to have your own power, and do as you please in my house? How long do you think I will support you in idleness?"

"In idleness, madam!" replied Mary, as she looked down at the bleeding and scarified fingers of her left hand, which had been tolerably ploughed up, by her unceasingly working at coarse, hard, home-made linen sheets.

"Aye, in idleness!" said Lady Brierly. "Do you suppose that I am to give you a salary of forty pounds a-year, for only doing what any poor cottage girl could, and would, do, gladly, for fourpence a-day. Are your hands to be kept in a pair of gloves all day, and only to be taken out of them that they may be looked at?"

"No, madam; I detest sloth and idleness, they would be unbefitting my situation. But, if you consider me a burden, and unworthy to receive the stipend you first named as my remuneration for my services, I am ready and willing to make it less, to receive but half of it."

"Half of it—very well; mind what you say, half of it—that is all I will give you, it

is all you are worth. But, young woman, there is a bad spirit lurking about you; I have long seen it. You have been more than two months with me, and, therefore, I can judge. You are displeased that, since the young ladies of my family came here, you have no way of exhibiting yourself, and seeking for admiration. You are left to yourself, and you have such a self-satisfied way about you, that it is easy to know you have a good opinion of yourself and your capabilities. But you can't be gratified here, you must put up with being kept in your own station. You may stare, but I now tell you plainly, that you are proud, and might have starved, but for my goodness in taking you out of poverty. I shall insist on your accepting Mr. Wormley. You hear of respectable people marrying for convenience, so you must, too."

Mary was inclined to be very angry, at the bitter impertinence with which the old lady spoke. She replied, with some contempt in her manner, and with a proud and rather haughty tone—

"Let me be no more persecuted, madam, I

desire. If my services are of no value to you, I can do for myself elsewhere."

"Come, come," was the reply—"no nonsense. Where could you go to?—who would give you a character? I am sure I would not. I am advising you as I would my nieces, or my daughters, if I had any. When people shut their eyes perversely to their own advantage, it is the duty of older and wiser heads to make them open them. So shall I. Mr. Wormley you shall marry."

"Never!" replied Mary, with a cold, proud frown.

"We shall see—we shall see, and that very soon," was Lady Brierly's answer, as Mary rose, and, with the air of a queen, left the apartment.

Mary, however, with all her anger, was aware of the advantages to be derived by her residence at Roughley, and determined that not one syllable of this persecution, relative to the odious Wormley, should be told to Hardy, who might, in passion and rage, insist upon her quitting a place, where she had, at least, the happiness of being unknown and unsuspected

—where she was free, and likely to remain so. The idea of being unceasingly harrassed and tormented was, nevertheless, very trying, and she felt assured that it would require a wonderful amount of moral courage, for her to be able to bear it.

CHAPTER IV.

“Devotion’s links compose a sacred chain
Of holy brightness and unmeasured length.”

LADY BRIERLY reposed on her horse-hair couch after her dinner, and its attendant modicum of whisky and water, to which Mary often ascribed the drowsy influences, that each day fell upon her patroness at the same hour. The autumn was fine but cold, and many dreary, damp hours had crept by, reminding the inhabitants of Roughley of the necessity of fires in the sharp mornings, and chilly evenings of the fast shortening days. But Lady Brierly only wrapped herself more closely up in flannels and shawls, regardless of

the shivering frames of her nieces, and Mary, who felt sadly the want of warmth, in that rambling, cold, dull house.

Hardy was at his post, awaiting with a beating heart, the arrival of Mary. As he met her, her cheek glowed, and her eye brightened; for, oh! how truly did she prize the deep love he bore her, in all her wretchedness and loneliness. Having walked to some distance, where they were secure at that hour, from observation and intrusion; Mary ventured to express her anxious hope, that he would not longer remain in that part of the country; as it was utterly impossible for her to again meet him, without incurring suspicion. The happy aspect which marked his countenance on their meeting, at once disappeared, as she stated her wishes to him. He said—

“ Ah! Mary, how can I bear to leave you in this miserable place, all through the long, dreary winter; in pity, in compassion, therefore, permit me sometimes, to have the pleasure and happiness of being near you, my beloved. Surely all the time that I have been near you, here, I never intruded on you, or

subjected you to any annoyances. Happy in breathing the same air with you, and sometimes, (oh, how seldom,) catching a glimpse of your shadow; I have been satisfied to lead a hermit's life, and give up the world. Oh! my own precious one! where there is great love, anxious, absorbing love like mine, there ever must exist, fear, jealousy, and uncertainty. You wonder at me, perhaps, for entertaining such sentiments; but a woman's heart can never realize the power and depth of man's devotion. I am unceasingly harrowed by doubts and fears, by fearful anticipations, that the wishes of my soul may be annihilated; and that direful fate may still continue to dissever our hearts. If you were in some place where I could occasionally see you, and watch over you; I could the better endure our position." He was silent for a moment, and then asked—

"Am I to leave you to the mercies of the obdurate old woman, Lady Brierly, of whom I hear such monstrous tales. Are you satisfied to remain with her alone and unsupported?"

"And why not, William, what have I to

fear from anyone not connected with me, and ignorant of my identity ? We all have many crosses to bear, even in the smoothest life ; and if the old lady is a little cross-grained, and hard to be pleased, that is no reason why I should not rejoice, that her roof offers me protection and shelter. But how is she so obdurate, what monstrous tales are they that are reported concerning her ?”

“ Those of her miserable and degraded early years, Mary ; those of her inhuman treatment of her husband’s only child ; these, and many other stories, very painful and revolting to my feelings, make me utterly regret ever being induced to send you hither. But the person from whom I heard of her wanting a companion, was very guarded, and left me completely in the dark, respecting her youth and general conduct.”

“ They can be of little harm to me, William, I have no fear of her influence over me in any way ; but, tell me, is her course of life at present, a doubtful one ?”

“ No ! now, and for some years, she has lived, I believe, a steady, regular life. There is nothing hinted about her at present, but in

former times, rumour speaks of her in very disparaging terms."

"And with cause, think you?"

"Yes! I fear so. She was not born to her present station, but reached it by unprincipled means. Had she been a well-conducted and worthy girl, her elevation would have been a credit to her; but, as she is and was, it is a disgrace."

"How, William? You must tell me."

Hardy coloured as he answered—

"It matters not, dearest, how or why; but she does not bear a spotless reputation."

"Then, will you not arrange for my departure, as soon as may be? I can travel in safety, I think, away from this. With your assistance, it can easily be done—can it not?"

"Perhaps not, dearest. As a place of security, you are well situated—that is your first object. It might be difficult to place you as well elsewhere; however, it shall be my duty to seek for some more fitting asylum than this ever can be. Lady Brierly treats you kindly, does she not?"

"Oh! as for that, it is of very little

matter. All places and people are pretty much the same to me. She considers herself as authorized to rule my whole life, and it is better, for peace sake, to allow her to do so in all unimportant matters."

"I believe, Mary, she is very unkind to you, for you have never spoken to me of one trait of goodness shown by her. Indeed, it would be hard to expect her to show kindness to any one after her treatment of Mrs. Burleigh, her husband's child."

"Is she alive?"

"No! she died in great penury, I am told. She left a son, who, for want of a parent's training, and the means of procuring education, became a great rascal, and broke his poor mother's heart. He is an inveterate enemy of Lady Brierly, and would put an end to her life if he could."

"Where is he?"

"Oh! no one knows. He is sometimes in this country, and remains in the house where I lodge now; so that, from the owner and his wife, I have heard much of him, and of his stepmother, who is no great favourite with the peasantry about Roughley. They all re-

gard her with jealous aversion, as one who possesses what she has no right to."

"Did not her husband bequeath all to her that he possessed?"

"Yes! but it is imagined that he wished to alter his will, in his daughter's favour, and that Lady Brierly, by unceasingly watching him, prevented his doing so. The will, which gave her everything, was disputed twice at law, by his daughter and her husband; but they gained nothing but increased poverty from the expenses of their most unsuccessful suits."

"Perhaps, William, she may relent to the son, and do him justice at her death."

"I fear not. As heir-at-law, he would come in for all her amazing property, did she die without making a will; but, you may be sure, such will not be the case. She will provide against a chance of that, for she mortally hates this Burleigh, I am told, and he returns her aversion with the bitterest hatred. Neglected training, bad companions, and a very violent temper, have made him a very dangerous enemy to his step-grandmother."

“Was she long married before her widowhood?”

“I believe not—merely in time to save his conscience, and give her a name before his death.”

“Then, was he attached to her?”

“Why, perhaps he was. But her life has been, from its earliest days, one of discredit. She did not meet with her husband till she was middle-aged, and he was an old, infirm man. By devoting herself to his whims and caprices, and getting rid of his only child, by inducing her to form an imprudent marriage, she gained entire ascendancy over him, and worked so completely upon his mind, that, ere he died, he married her, and left her an immense fortune, not only in lands and estates, but in the funds, railroads, and private securities. She is a clever woman, with a calculating brain; she sees the value of reputation, and has tried, of late years, to make one. When I read her advertisement, requiring a companion, I made it my business to go to her myself. I found her, as I thought, a steady, good woman, who bore, from the clergyman of the parish in which

Roughley is situated, a very high character ; but, since my sojourn up here, these last weeks, I have found out that the clergyman is a man not much to be depended on, and that he himself received his benefice from Lady Brierly, which fully accounts for his eulogiums of her. Satisfied at what I heard and saw, I gladly hailed the opportunity of placing you in so retired a place, and, as I thought, in such a desirable situation. You must forgive me for its turning out as it did—will you not ?”

Mary smiled, as she affectionately pressed her hand on the arm on which she was leaning ; but she did not speak, her cheek glowed like crimson, and tears, unbidden, rolled down. He kissed them off again and again, clasping her hand more tenderly in his. Each heart was full of varied feelings ; and, at length, Mary remembered the lateness of the hour, and the necessity of parting. The scene was painfully distressing that followed. Whoever chooses to remark woman’s character attentively, will frankly confess they always act, in cases of trial and emergency, with firmness much more decided and evident

than do men. They frequently evince a composure and calmness forming an exception to all pre-conceived opinions. It is after the trouble has passed, or that the danger is over, that they break down, and show themselves to be really the weaker sex. So with Mary. Her composure under the trying affliction of separating from her only friend, and resigning herself to the continual misery of dwelling with a bad, hard-hearted woman, was wonderful. She tried to comfort and support her companion in his misery and violent emotion; she argued gently, with deep affection, on the bitter necessity of the act and the benefit it would be to herself; she soothed his agitated mind—she dried his tears—she left him, in agony uncontrollable, knowing that she left her happiness with him; still, she was quiet and composed. As she walked home, she did so with steady steps; and, entering the house, laid by her walking apparel, without any tremor of the hands that did so. Then she went at once to her household duties, for the hour was a late one; and, meeting Lady Brierly, was able to answer her with a calm voice, though that beautiful voice was lower

and deeper than usual in its tones. It was only when, at night, alone in her own cheerless chamber that the tide of grief and desolation took its full course. Through her miserable future there gleamed no ray of hope.

Mary laboured on, with outward quietness and unchanging gentleness. Even though working from the earliest light of morning, until twelve at night, she still kept unaltered her firmness and resolution. She did not relax one hour's labour—she never was permitted, by any chance, to do so. That so much uncomplaining patience, retiring modesty, and firmness of purpose should not meet its reward in Lady Brierly's approval, is wonderful, and would seem to be almost impossible. But it was so, and Mary found it often a hard matter to command time to write to Hardy. She did, however, contrive to write, with assumed cheerfulness, and regularity, once in each week, and, by the help of a small bribe, and some kindly smiles and words, had them posted privately.

Lady Brierly had a rheumatic fever shortly after her nieces left her in October. It lasted

for some weeks, and she suffered extreme agony. It was some time before she was aware of the extent of Mary's services to her. Her attentions were untiring and ceaseless, and to her tender nursing, the doctor said, Lady Brierly might attribute her recovery. As soon as the old lady had completely recovered from her severe illness, and was able to move about, so as to superintend her concerns, she found that Mary had conducted all and everything to her utmost satisfaction—as also to that of the gaunt housemaid and starved footman, into both of whose favour she had unwittingly entered. The coldness of the weather was excessive, and the poor girl suffered dreadfully. As long as Lady Brierly was confined to her own room, there was comparative comfort, from having a fire in it, which the doctor insisted upon having kept up, night and day. But as soon as she left her apartment, and came down stairs, there was no hope of warmth or comfort to be entertained. All was dull, cheerless, and hopeless, in and about Roughley, during the long, dreary, monotonous months that intervened between October and May. Mr. Wormley

paid many visits, and never seemed to resign one jot of his expectation of eventual success with Mary—or hope of, in time, overcoming her dislike to him. The house would seem to be uninhabited, so quiet and dull did it from day to day appear; its chambers were solitary and cheerless, for no echoes awoke in it from joyful sounds, or glad voices of the gay and happy. It had been so ever since it had been built. The daughter of that home, once loved and idolized by a fond mother, had there heard the murmurs of the grave, as it reached that doting parent's heart, and severed her from her child. It had ever after been a miserable dwelling. A foolish, almost doteing, old father had in that dwelling placed a fiend with an angel's face, who, impure in mind and heart, had rested satisfied with the position she held in it, of mistress, without the honourable name of wife.

Very harshly had Annie Brierly been treated by her father's companion; subjected to contumely, contempt, and degradation. Only half educated, she was thrown, at an early age, constantly into dangers and temptations, which, with prudence unusual at her age, she escaped.

But, unfortunately, she met with a young English officer, who, penniless, like herself, did not find it difficult to induce her to fly with him to the shrine of the northern Hymen—there to satisfy their love, and laugh to defiance all danger of being separated.

Mary heard much of all this from the nurse-tender, who was brought to assist her in attending on Lady Brierly, during her rheumatic fever. The worthy woman was an inhabitant of a neighbouring village, where every one and everybody knew all things connected with the Roughley family. She said the son of Mrs. Burleigh was a very vindictive, passionate young man. He had, at fourteen years of age, run off to sea, and thereby broken his poor mother's heart. Ever since then, he had from time to time come on shore, and always visited Roughley and the neighbourhood, where many of the old families gave him a welcome, for his mother's sake. But he was sadly dissipated, and many evil rumours were continually afloat about him and his actions. Lady Brierly never mentioned his name before Mary, or made any allusion to him. But his conduct towards her had been

of a description very dangerous and alarming. After the trial which decided the legality of his grandfather's will in Lady Brierly's favour, she had been in much dread of young Burleigh's violence and resentment; he had threatened her life over and over, and not until she was sure of his departure to India, did she ever venture out unattended by a servant, and herself bearing firearms. But years had gone by, and it was reported that her adversary had been drowned on his way to Madras.

Lady Brierly was confined the whole winter to the house, and, in consequence, her companion was never permitted to go out, or leave the old lady to herself. The labour of reading was very painful and unceasing. Mary found a constant pain in her chest, and a short tickling cough the result of it; but that made no difference with her harsh task-mistress, whose literary taste ran in a rather unusual course for a female reader. She delighted in political pamphlets, parliamentary debates, agricultural reports, and country statistics, which were very dry and uninteresting to the companion forced to read them at a high pitch of voice for hours after hours; while

she herself sat knitting, untiringly and continuously, at her counterpane squares, listening attentively to each sentence as it fell from Mary's lips, and oft-times calling to her to repeat some passage or page of the book, which either particularly pleased her fancy, or was difficult of comprehension.

Mr. Wormley's society gave some relief from this labour occasionally. His visits were generally for two or three days at a time, and when they occurred, business and accounts took the place of all other employments; and writing from his or Lady Brierly's dictation, and casting up long rows of figures in rentals and bills, was Mary's occupation. It was very trying, and very annoying, for her to be compelled to be in such close association with one like the lawyer, who had so determinedly and unchangeably annoyed her. But she strove to feel careless of the matter, and showed by her cold, proud manner her dislike and repugnance in a way not to be looked over.

The servants of the establishment tried to make Mary's position as comfortable as they could, with a regard to their own safety. The housemaid, a rough, ungainly woman, had

purchased for Mary, at her own suggestion, some tea and sugar, which she prepared into a private breakfast, at an early hour, for the poor girl, before Lady Brierly came down stairs to eat her stirabout. When Mr. Wormley was at Roughley, he had meat and ale for his morning meal. Then in the afternoon the same attendant would furnish a cup of milk, and a piece of oat-cake, when she saw that Mary was unable to partake of the rough salted meats, which formed the staple food of the lady and her household during winter and spring. Old Lawrence, the footman, would contrive to separate her letters from those of his mistress, before she saw them, and carry off the replies in the same mysterious way.

As early spring appeared, and the lengthening days gave hope of more cheerful and hopeful ones, Lady Brierly was able to change out of one sitting-room into another; even this was a great relief, for the dark dungeon in which the winter had been passed, was gloomy, and without any prospect, save that of the back-yard. But, from the windows of the other rooms, there were fine mountain views, bold and romantic, with wild, impetuous

streams coursing beneath wild hills and heathery rocks, of uncultivated grandeur and sombre aspect. Even the liberty of being permitted to gaze out upon those lavish and magnificent beauties of nature, was a luxury to Mary. When the weather was bad, the prospect was completely obscured, and shut out by the sheets of driving mist, which floated over the whole scene, wrapping everything in an impenetrable gloom.

One night, after a day of continued fatigue at long accounts with Mr. Wormley, she was glad to be dismissed from the sitting-room, where the day had been spent, by Lady Brierly, who had private matters of business to discuss with her adviser. Mary accordingly departed, and proceeded to the drawing-room. It rained violently, and the wind was whistling and moaning through the windows. As she was passing on, she was surprised to see the glass door, opening out to the front of the house, open; as, hitherto, she had known it to be Lady Brierly's especial care that it should never be opened. To what circumstance its being so was owing, and on such a severe evening, too, she could not imagine;

but, of course, concluding it was some oversight on the part of the servants, or forgetfulness, she laid down her candle for the purpose of shutting and fastening it. As she did so, she found her efforts resisted from without. Seized with sudden terror, she directly drew back, and was on the point of snatching up the light, in order to hasten back and give the alarm, when a man rushed in at the open door, and, catching her in his arms, dragged her from it ere she had power to utter a cry, placing his hand on her mouth, to prevent her doing so. In the midst of her struggling, old Lawrence entered the room through the same open door, and rushing up to the athletic stranger, who held Mary, whispered some words to him in an agitated and imploring tone. She was instantly freed, and the man, with a respectful manner, entreated her to compose herself, as she had nothing to fear from him ; he had mistaken her for another person.

She trembled with fright and alarm, but the presence of Lawrence re-assured her, and she, by degrees, became composed. The old footman, no less agitated than herself, en-

deavoured to calm her, begging her, with the utmost respect and anxiety, to be silent, and not raise an alarm. He said that the stranger was a friend of his, who, having most particular information to give him, had come to Roughley without Lady Brierly's knowledge. It was of vital consequence that her ladyship should be kept in ignorance of the matter. The wetness of the night had induced him to open the private glass door, and admit his friend out of the rain, while the lady was busy engaged with Mr. Wormley. He ended by imposing secrecy on Mary. The stranger, who had been looking at her for some time, said—

“I am very sorry for alarming you, madam, I trust you will pardon me, but the offence was perfectly unintentional. My friend, Lawrence, has stated the truth with reference to me, and I only hope you will kindly preserve him from his mistress's anger, by keeping the matter to yourself. To a lady of her temperament, his admitting an old friend, even for an hour, to see him, would be a crime, which she would most unhesitatingly punish by instant dismissal.”

Mary, somewhat re-assured, promised all

that was required. The stranger bowed his thanks, and speaking a few low words to Lawrence, passed out of the glass door, which the old man immediately closed after him ; and putting up the shutters, turned to Mary with a profound bow of gratitude, murmuring his thanks for her promise and kind consideration.

For several minutes after he left her, she continued fixed to the spot on which she was, so confused and so bewildered was she by the incident that had just occurred. The strange circumstances of the whole affair left her in a chaos of doubt and uncertainty as to the propriety of the promise she had made. That there was any treachery meant by Lawrence she could not possibly imagine, but decided in her own mind to carefully examine the doors and windows of the house, each night, before she retired to bed. While still musing on the distressing subject, the bell rang, and Lawrence was ordered to summons Miss Humphreys to Lady Brierly. For some moments after she had seated herself at the table, she had no power to fix her thoughts on anything but her adventure. A few sharp reprimands from the

old lady, however, had a beneficial effect ; and she was soon deeply engaged in enumerating hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands.

With the deepest regret and reluctance, she found herself, next morning *tête-à-tête* with Wormley. Lady Brierly had a slight attack of rheumatic pains, and was obliged to remain in bed the greater part of the day, so that as the business of the accounts was still going on, Mary found herself at the mercy of his tender glances, and his loving addresses. She sighed deeply, and would have run off if she could, but she was aware of the necessity of holding her place. She tried very hard not to see him, or hear him, she felt so much scorn and disgust that she could hardly bear to reply to any queries, even on the business matters.

“Come,” he said, “confess yourself sorry for all that has passed between us, for, faith, I am so bewitched by you that that I can’t deny any pardon.”

Mary did not answer, she kept her head resolutely bent over the ponderous ledger which lay before her; he continued—

“Don’t be cross or sulky. There is one thing that I can positively assure you of,—

that is, that in spite of all you can do and say, in spite of all opposition, I am still determined to make you a participator of all that I possess, a sharer of my wealth, my own wife."

No answer still, so he waxed angry and went on—

"My conduct is very handsome towards you, and so it is thought by Lady Brierly too. Harken to me, don't imagine that I am trifling, when I tell you, you shall marry me. I cannot help laughing at myself, for annoying my mind about you; about a girl who is only just lifted out of the mire of adversity and obscurity. I suppose your brain is turned by my conduct and condescension, and you fancy that, since you have succeeded in catching my affections, you may have a nobleman at your feet. The fact is that you have a lover in your head, that blush avows it, but, by the Lord, if you don't dislodge him, I shall make you pay for it."

She looked up with proud defiance, but was mute.

"Have you no tongue? perhaps I might unloose it, if I said all that I know and believe about you. Let your own conscience answer that. Scarcely can I confine my indignation

against you, within proper bounds. But I shall take care that this is the last time I shall demean myself by asking for your love. Go, and let the degradation and obloquy, which you deserve, have a salutary effect upon your proud, stubborn heart. Such insensibility as yours almost makes you abhorrent to me."

Mary threw down her pen ; she would have cried, but that pride prevented her doing so before her impudent companion. With a burning blush of anger, which was almost immediately succeeded by the ashy paleness of degraded feelings, she rose, and, with a defiant air, walked to the door. But, if the annoyances she suffered were great, as she passed out, her happiness was a recompense, for, as she did so, she encountered Lawrence, who held in his hand a letter for her, from her only correspondent.

"Oh, my own beloved ! hard and difficult it is for me to act in accordance with your desires, and remain estranged, divided. A thousand times, since I last wrote, have I decided to break through my promise, and hurry to you ; but, the remembrance of you, the memory of your tender pleadings, the

recollection of your earnest entreaties, prevail over inclination, and every feeling that it prompts, and, in obedience to your wishes, I remain away, wretched and miserable. Every thought, every idea of my soul is centred in you. Oh! woe, unutterable, oh! anguish, unbearable—to think of your lone, hapless state, uncheered, un comforted by one kindly and congenial being! As I think on it, and on all that you so uncomplainingly endure, my precious one, I feel almost driven to madness, I writhe in agony, and my withered breast seems unable to endure another and an additional pang. Notwithstanding the hopes that I did try to cherish, notwithstanding the knowledge of your assured affection, I feel I cannot much longer bear with my fate. If I were near you, dearest, even though I could not see you, nor hear the sweet tones of your beloved voice, I might control my feelings, and the restrictions and enforced forms of society would be needless. I could indulge my mournful inclinations, and I could follow my own pursuits, and revel in my own thoughts, freed from the observation of prying friends and curious mortals. From

companionship with mankind I steal away, to wander in unrestrained freedom of thought, hopeful of being unnoted and unminded ; but those hours of luxurious dreamings, when all the mind and soul are fixed on you, are speedily drawn to a close, and I find myself, wherever I go, watched, and the victim of unwished-for sympathy.

“The being with whom you now reside has become hateful to me. I have pursued my enquiries of and about her far and wide. She was favoured by nature with great beauty ; and, unfortunately, early in life, fell into sin. Years of unchecked vice hardened her heart, and made her artful and covetous. She lived shamelessly ; and, with difficulty, won, by the wages of iniquity, sufficient to sustain her in life, and pay for the support of her child. Years rolled on, and found her still the same being, scorned and degraded. A chance threw her in the way of an old, silly man, who induced her to take up her residence with him, as his nominal housekeeper. With delight, she accepted the post, which brought her a step farther on in her guilty course. She toiled and worked unceasingly, till she in-

duced her protector to marry her, shortly before his death. By the deepest cunning, she separated him from his child, and all his relations, ruling him with all the power of the most consummate hypocrisy. When life was ebbing, and reason sat lightly, and with uncertainty, on her throne, a will was concocted, by which she became possessed of amazing properties, landed and monied. Not a word about his child was mentioned; though she was, at the time of her father's death, starving, a young widow, with an infant son. Kind friends came forward to assist the daughter to put forward her claims to the property so unjustly taken away from her; but, unhappily, her suit was dismissed, and the unjust widow was confirmed in the possession of all her wealth. It is said that, before the cause was brought into court, Lady Brierly offered to compromise the matter, and give her step-daughter forty thousand pounds, provided she gave up the law-suit, and bound herself never to revive it. Unhappily, evil, though well-intentioned, advice made her reject the offer, and declare her determination of possessing *all or none*. An ungrateful child added the crown-

ing blow of misery to the heart of Mrs. Burleigh ; and now her ill-conditioned, uneducated son is a pauper on the world, a bad, bold man, vowing vengeance, deep and bitter, against his aged foe. There is a report abroad that he is dead, but I do not believe it ; from what I could hear, when living near to Roughley, the peasants know, for a certainty, that he still lives, and still breathes defiance and revenge. Lady Brierly is a woman to be feared and dreaded ; and, therefore it is, my Mary, that my wretchedness is increased tenfold. I am anxiously hoping that some good chance may make me acquainted with some desirable, secluded home, different from the one you now possess ; but, as yet, my search has been unsuccessful. There is so much circumspection requisite in naming a wish for a proper situation, in accordance with your wants and requirements, that I find it very difficult even to mention the matter with seeming unconcern. My aunt is aware that you are not happy or well-placed, and is working, with her best energies, to promote your wishes relative to a change of habitation ; but she knows, and is assured, that she con-

tinues to be an object of suspicion to your relatives, who keep a strict watch upon Fort-field still; and, therefore, she fears that any move at present, that she should know anything of, would be the means of endangering your safety. This season of the year, these months of early promise and beauty, recal you, my beloved, more strongly than ever, to my mind. I think upon this time last year, when, near you, and enjoying the blessing of seeing and hearing you, I dreamed of happiness which fate utterly precludes, with almost hopeless strength and power. Do you, dearest, forget the first bright days of spring—those cheering days when first I dared to to show, by look and manner, that I loved you—when, little by little, day after day, and week after week, I caught the hope of returning affection, that not all the proud, cold prudery of your heart could repress? Do you remember our walks, and rides, and ramblings—the first declaration of my profound, unchanging love, and worshipping devotion?—do you remember our days of love, our hours of trial, and our bitter sorrowings, our sad, sad, hopeless partings? But

why should I harrow up your soul, dearest and best, by reminiscences of horrid times gone by?—why should I wound your sensitive heart by the recalling of blessed memories? No! Mary, if your love is like mine, it needs no magician's wand to conjure up the recollections of the past; they must be, now and for ever, indelibly imprinted on your heart, as they are on that of your brother."

Mary had hardly time to read through this long letter of Hardy's, before Lady Brierly came into her room to demand the support of her arm down-stairs. The old lady had risen, when a lull in her pains permitted her; and, having heard from the housemaid, Meg, that her companion had left the society of Mr. Wormley, had hurried her dressing, so as to see that Mary returned to her business, and Mr. Wormley. However, as the longest and saddest day must have an end, she was able, ere she retired to bed, to answer the letter, and to write as follows—

"Disinclined to rest and sleep, I seize the earliest hours of the night to devote them to you, dearest Hardy. Soothed by the affection and kindness of your letter, I seem to forget

all the disappointments and annoyances of the time that has elapsed since last I wrote to you. Lady Brierly continues to improve, though slowly ; therefore, my labours are less weighty ; besides, Mr. Wormley is again here, and, therefore, I do not read. Comparative rest and quiet is invaluable to me ; for I, too, have been ill with the effects of the constant use of my voice. But your letter of to-day seems to have driven off all aspects of illness ; and I have revelled in the enjoyment which the tranquillizing effect of it has bestowed. I am, indeed, thankful ; deeply so, for the possession of your affection and regard—blessings that are to me invaluable. Oh ! who that boasts the privilege of having such a true friend can feel entirely unhappy ? The comforts of wealth, and independence of action, may never be mine ; but thou—oh ! thou—who, by thy true regard and power, hast manifested such disinterested affection, and has preserved me through so many trials and dangers, make me know that as long as you exist I cannot be wholly miserable, and entirely deprived of happiness. It makes me, however, unhappy to find you so

very low and so anxious on my account ; and I can see in your letter a spirit of thought, as if you doubted the extent of my regard for you. Believe me, dearest William, my thoughts are ever with you. Each day, and hour, and moment, my only friend is in my heart and mind. Never do I lay myself upon my bed, before you have passed before me in my prayers ; and my first earthly wish and aspiration is for you. Remember, that giving way to unremitting despondency does not ameliorate our condition ; in fact, it adds to your misery—throws a gloom over those times when rays of light are permitted to visit the darkened mind. My days flow on here in an even tenor. They are, indeed, busy ones ; but the business is peremptory, and seems to increase on my hands, and keep me so much employed that I cannot even find time to go abroad and view the verdure of the fields, and the tender buds of the opening plants. It would be refreshing could I do so, and go out each evening to unbend my mind with the enjoyment of fresh air and rural scenery, after puzzling my brains for numberless hours upon pounds, shillings, and pence. Your account of the youth who should

in justice possess the wealth which Lady Brierly holds, is deeply interesting to me. Unhappy man, I do, indeed, pity him, quite as much as I censure his cold, ruthless step-mother. I heard much of him and his mother from an old dame that was here in attendance on Lady Brierly, in her fever. He seems to hold the sympathies of all, round this place; and I hope that time may eventually change his stepmother's mind towards him, and induce her to put him in possession, at her death, of his rights, so long and so unjustly kept from him. I do not think his disposition is as bad and vicious as you have heard it is. I am told that though very passionate and violent in anger, he is open-hearted, very affectionate, and generous. He felt long and bitterly for the sorrow which he had caused his mother, by running away to sea; but beyond that act of undutifulness, I believe, he has nothing to upbraid himself with, excepting being joined to persons who are reported to be engaged in smuggling. But, poor fellow! his was a hard lot; poor, uneducated, and neglected, what could be expected from him? He applied for employment on his return from

sea, the year his mother died, but being unsupported by interest, his applications were neglected; and, when disgusted and disappointed with all his exertions, he went back to a sailor's life of hardship, after in vain trying to soften the inhumanity and injustice of his connections, who took advantage of his warm and hasty temperament to offend him, and humble his pride; by these means wholly getting rid of him. Indignant and dejected, he, for some time, led a wandering life—sometimes on the sea, at other times on land. At last he enlisted in a regiment going out to Madras. It was about this time that the unfortunate young man tried, for the last time, his cause at law against Lady Brierly. It is very long before hope entirely dies within the human breast; so it was with him. By delusive expectations, and the advice of ill-judging friends, he struggled to bring forward his claims, only to see them again completely overthrown. So, in utter carelessness of life, and all this world contained, he left England in a ship for India, which has never been heard of since, and that is now nearly three years ago; however, in all human proba-

bility, your surmises of his being yet in the land of the living, are not fallacious. The ideas caused by the remembrance of poor young Burleigh's trials, and his unhappy mother's sufferings, induce a train of reflections very painful to the mind, and that continually occupy my thoughts when I can separate them from my own troubles. I was greatly affected at the sick-nurse's sorrowful tale, and it made me feel totally out of humour with all and everything connected with Lady Brierly. My own afflictions have opened my heart to feeling for the griefs of others. It would be a despicable trait in the history of human nature, if the suffering heart of man would not respond to the cry of desponding affliction, and endeavour to bind up the bruised soul, pouring in the comforting oil of commiserating feeling. It would be sinful, indeed, in me, were I to be so wholly engrossed with my own cares, as not to be able to bend my feelings to the wants and woes of others as miserable as myself, and without the unction of commiserating emotion. You kindly named in one of your letters your anxiety about my pecuniary affairs. Thanks, very many, for the

kindness and attention which prompted the inquiry. I want for nothing—at least, for nothing that money could procure me ; I have enough, and to spare. You may rest assured, dearest friend, that did I require such aid, it would be at once freely and frankly asked for. Do not make yourself at all uneasy on my account, my health is very tolerable, and as I am not reading aloud now, my cough will soon leave me, I trust. The time which now lies before me I shall, I trust, with God's blessing, employ to my own advantage ; and I trust that, as it creeps on, I shall be found wiser and better. I have here no inducements to interrupt my study of myself—no society, no pleasures. I trust that you and I may mutually assist each other by counsel, by admonition, and, though last, not least, by prayer. You, as well as I, can call on God to bless, comfort, and preserve you, to guide and to protect you from all evil temptations that may assail you. Remember He is always with you and with me ; He is our only comforter in every gloom. What friend can we possess equal to Him, who is the merciful and benignant Father of all ? So saying, I shall

bring this long and, I fear, tiresome letter to a conclusion, and say farewell! Ungrateful and callous as you may deem me, unfeeling as I may seem, I have a heart tenderly devoted to the love of my very dear brother, and I shall prove myself to be unchangeably your

“MARY.”

CHAPTER V.

“And yet young Edwin was no vulgar boy.”—

YOUNG BURLEIGH lost his father when he was only seven years old; with him died the scanty means that had supported his wife and child. The poor widow was sunk into the lowest depths of sorrow and want, but, for some time, she continued to eke out a scanty subsistence by plain sewing. She could not afford to send her boy to school, and it was with a heavy heart that she saw him running wild, while she had neither time nor talent to instruct him. Matters went on so, till he was

about fourteen—tall and well grown, for his age, but shy and awkward in his manners and speech, with a strong Scotch accent. Tempted by the charms of a sailor's life—which were recounted to him by a discharged tar, who resided in the same village with Mrs. Burleigh, her son, in an evil hour, hearkened to the suggestions of his evil genius, and ran off, entering himself on board a merchant ship, trading to Australia. When he returned, it was to find himself motherless, alone in the world. When a little recovered from the dreadful effect of the blow he received on hearing the sad news, he joined the British fleet, and remained away for many years on board a man-of-war.

Before his flight from home, he had been acquainted with a family of respectability, to whom his mother was known. Being permitted to associate with the children of this family, a long and lasting friendship arose between them, which, on his return to Scotland, at different periods, remained unchanged. When, on his return, about his twentieth year, after a protracted and unusual absence, he again met his friends—they, like himself,

had passed from boyhood and girlhood into manhood. One of the family, a sweet, pretty girl, allowed herself to look with affectionate interest on her old companion and associate, now grown into a fine, manly fellow, six feet high. After a while, a mutual affection sprung up, and prospects of bliss and happiness opened to the view of Burleigh, surpassing all that he ever could have hoped to enjoy. But, alas! clouds and darkness were destined quickly to overshadow his hopes, and those of the fair young creature he loved.

The father of Julia was a man of very rough, selfish, tyrannical disposition; and no sooner was it evident that Burleigh loved his daughter, than a change came over the feelings which he had before regarded him with, and he gave strict injunctions to her to see him no more. But her feelings were not in accordance with his—she could neither recal her affections, nor bring herself to cancel the vows which she had with unselfish devotion made. But, convinced that it would be worse than useless to appeal to her father's feelings, Julia contented herself with—in private—repeating to Burleigh the assurances of her inviolable attachment.

With this assurance poor Burleigh was forced to be contented, and he departed to join his ship, which was on the eve of sailing to the West Indies. He did not leave Julia, however, before a mode of correspondence had been settled upon between them—for neither to see or hear of each other, was more than they could bear to think of. Three years had elapsed when he returned to find Julia more lovely, and more devotedly his, than ever. Notwithstanding the desperate situation in which he was, and his penniless condition, he found her ready and willing to be his, and to share his fate, whatever might be the consequence of the step. Immediately on the solemnization of the hurried nuptials, Burleigh and his young bride set off to implore forgiveness from her offended parent. But it was vain, their prayers and their entreaties were disregarded. Nothing could exceed the rage of the father, and he solemnly swore never to see or recognize his child.

Transient, therefore, was the bliss of their union. The anguish inflicted by this cruel disappointment to their hopes of being forgiven, may easier be conceived than described.

The anguish was very bitter which he endured, at the idea of what it was but too probable she—his idolized wife—would have to suffer through his means. By delusive expectations, and faintly reviving hopes of forgiveness, they struggled on, for some time, through daily increasing scenes of wretchedness. At length, the confinement of Julia compelled Burleigh to make humiliating requests for trifling assistance from Lady Brierly, who, with contempt and scorn, refused any aid or assistance to the wretched young man. A few of his grandfather's old tenants privately subscribed a small sum, for the assistance of the young couple, in this season of extreme need.

Burleigh received from Julia's father the humiliating intimation that, provided he left the country, wholly and entirely, he would consent to receive his daughter and her child into his house, and support her till, by some fortunate chance, her husband would be able to take her off his hands. With a sad heart, well nigh broken, he consented ; and, accordingly, once more the pining victim of domestic tyranny was received home with her infant. And the unhappy young husband, smarting

under the pangs of his outraged and wounded feelings, enlisted ; and, after a fearful separation from his almost maddened wife, left the shores of his native land once more to brave the perils and danger of a foreign clime. Years passed without any intelligence arriving from him ; it was imagined that he had perished in the ship, which conveying a draft of his regiment to Madras, had never been heard of. There seemed to exist hardly a shadow of doubt that he had gone down with his gallant comrades in the missing Indiaman.

With deep and increasing interest Mary gathered all the particulars of this melancholy affair. At first she found it very difficult to induce any one about Roughley to speak of Burleigh or his mother ; but, by degrees, as the deep interest she felt became apparent, she gathered more and more information.

One morning, very early, she ventured out to take a stroll through the fields. A letter, lately received, was taken from her pocket and re-perused ; gradually she became wholly absorbed in its contents. Her mind was intent on its consideration of the dear missive that she held, when accidentally looking up,

she saw the athletic figure of the strange intruder into the house at Roughley some time before. She remembered him well ; for the alarm she had experienced at the time, and the conflicting feelings afterwards, had indelibly impressed him on her memory. She started, and walked on, rather alarmed at this unexpected encounter with one who had so greatly frightened her.

He, however, instantly approached her, but with a most respectful air, and deprecating manner. He reiterated his apologies for the adventure which had alarmed her, and thanked her for her kindness in keeping the matter from the knowledge of Lady Brierly, “not,” he said, “for his own sake, but for that of the worthy Lawrence, who had been his best friend for many a year.”

Mary replied with her characteristic gentleness and sweetness of manner ; and was about to walk away. Scarcely had she done so, ere her heart reproached her ; for she suspected who and what the stranger was. It was not kind, she thought, to hurry coldly off, without speaking a few words to one who evidently felt grateful for a trifling service.

In her sudden but quickly repented eagerness to leave him, she had turned into a steep and intricate path, beset with briars and brambles; in these she got so completely entangled, that she could neither advance nor retreat; the stranger seeing her dilemma, quickly sprang forward, saying—

“May I presume to offer my services?”

His efforts being successful, he was about to take leave, with a bow, when she timidly thanked him, and said—

“Are you venturing to the house?”

“No,” he replied, the blood mantling his whole face with sudden emotion—“no, madam, I should be an unwelcome intruder in my grandfather’s house. You will judge so, too, when I tell you that I am Lady Brierly’s stepson—the unfortunate Charles Burleigh.”

Mary could not resist the feeling of extending her hand to him, with a frank and kindly action. He took it respectfully. She said—

“I trust there may be better days in store for you, Mr. Burleigh, than those that have passed. Your sad tale has been one of deep interest to me. Would that I could further

your cause with Lady Brierly ; but, unfortunately, I, myself, am but a poor dependent ; and my speaking would but aggravate her bitter feelings."

"I thank you, Miss Humphreys, for your sympathy. My lot is a hard one, and difficult to be borne. I am an outcast of society ; denied my rightful inheritance ; separated from all I love ; a lonely, miserable pauper, with scarcely one pitying friend !"

"Ah, but you must not despair. There is an overruling power that works all things well for those who trust Him. Have courage, and though the horizon looks black and hopeless, 'there is a silver lining to every cloud,' and it will yet, perchance, glisten through all hindrances and impediments, and light up your future years with joy and gladness."

"You speak well and kindly, madam ; but, I fear, do not prophecy truly. The dull future, now spread before me, is a return to my state of servile bondage in a burning clime—perhaps, never to return—to leave the dear object of my heart and soul, with scarcely having beheld her, except for a few hurried interviews clandestinely snatched ; without

embracing my precious infant, or hearing its dear voice. To return to misery and degradation, leaving home and happiness behind; these miseries betoken but little sunshine in the gloom of my existence."

"Yet, notwithstanding all the torturings and trials of Job, was he not comforted and blessed a thousand times more in his end than in his beginning? Mercy reached him when all hope had left him. He knew the mercies of God, and trusted in them, and he was not disappointed. Trust in the same power; He can and will do more, and better, and more abundantly than you can ask or think. Out of darkness He can command 'light, and there will be light.'"

"Would that I could nerve my soul to think with you, lady; but how can I hope?"

"Hope on, hope ever. Lady Brierly cannot live for ever. She may relent, and return your birthright to you. Perhaps she may die intestate, and then the law will restore it."

"There is but little chance of those prognostications being verified. She will not quit this world without making good her right to

bequeath every shilling she possesses as she pleases. Wormley, that sneaking, contemptible mortal, my bitterest enemy, is too much with her, and too constantly advising her, not to have warned her of the importance of making a will. Indeed, I believe that has been done long ago. I have information that the cunning rascal has amply provided for himself in the distribution, and that he cares not how soon the old woman departs, now that he has secured a lion's share of the spoil. Do you not think that during the old lady's recent illness a will was made?"

"I cannot say. I remember one day that Mr. Wormley was admitted into the sick room, that he remained there for some time; the nurse-tender, Mrs. Howell, and I were told to withdraw to another room, and leave the sick lady and the lawyer to themselves. Mr. Wormley wrote all that day and evening until twelve o'clock at night. The next day he went again to Lady Brierly's room, and having been again closeted with her, during which time he read aloud from the parchments he had engrossed, old Lawrence and the doctor witnessed the affixing her name to the deed,

which was consigned to Mr. Wrenley's keeping. In all probability it was Lady Eberley's will, but I know nothing more of the matter."

"All that you have now told me, Miss Humphreys, I have heard before. You may think it strange, but it is true, that I have finished information of every circumstance that occurs at Roughton. But I must not longer detain you; your absence may create suspicion. From my heart I thank you for your kindness." So saying, he again raised his hat from his head, and Mary, passing on, returned home in time to meet Lady Eberley at the breakfast-table.

Mary sat down with many unpleasant feelings waiting in her mind. She could not drive the recollection of the wretched Burleigh from her. She dwelt upon the thoughts of that savage old woman's cruelty, of her old husband's cruel folly and unjust will, of the poor desolate wife and helpless child, and the tears rose to her eyes; and had she attempted to swallow a mouthful of her unwholesome breakfast, that lay before her, she felt that it must choke her.

During all the time of Mary's residence at

Roughley, she had become acquainted with but one family of respectability, and that was through the medium of Mrs. Howell. This good old sick-nurse knew Mrs. Grafton very well, and constantly attended at her house in all cases of illness. She had made mention of Mary, with warm encomiums, to this lady, who took an opportunity, on Sunday, to speak to the companion, as she came out of church, and made inquiries relative to Lady Brierly's state of health. Shortly after, Mrs. Grafton walked over to Roughley; and, by degrees, a sort of intimacy sprang up with Miss Humphreys. Mrs. Grafton, with her daughter, occupied a very small cottage, about two miles from Lady Brierly, and an air of contentment and happiness was visible in the humble abode, truly gratifying to behold.

From the Graftons, Mary had heard much of Mrs. Burleigh, whom both mother and daughter knew well. For her son they had deep feeling and pity, and often ventured to bring forward hints of his wretched state to Lady Brierly, when all others dared not do it. To them, therefore, Mary told of her interview, and detailed all that Burleigh had said to her. They strongly recommended her not

to mention the matter to Lady Brierly, whose excitement and rage would be excessive, did she know of his return to England. They agreed with her in detesting Wormley, who bore a very indifferent character himself, and had been known to fabricate divers untruths about Burleigh, whom he hated intensely.

Lawrence looked at Mary several times during the day, as if to tell her that *he* was aware of her interview, and increased in his zeal and anxiety to attend upon her, and offer all the civilities his station permitted him to do.

Wormley left Roughley, to get some deeds, which he had executed for Lady Brierly, registered; so that, on his departure, Mary returned to her occupation of reading continually. Lady Brierly was able to get out in a little pony-chaise, each fine day, and, by degrees, recommenced her superintendence of her labourers. The spring being far advanced, she found that, in consequence of her illness and confinement to the house, much had been neglected. This raised her wrath for many days, and she vented it freely on the innocent Mary, who, however, bore it, as she did all things, with untiring and christian patience.

One fine, brisk morning in April, Lady Brierly felt so far recovered, that she determined to go out and superintend the operations of about twenty girls, whom she had ordered to go to a particular field, and pick off it an amazing quantity of field stones, which had remained upon it on the previous year, when it had been prepared with an oat crop, for laying down into meadow-land.

It was the constant practice of this lady, to get as much done for nothing as she possibly could; and, therefore, she was always anxious to engage those girls, daughters of her tenants and labourers, whose days of toil, in her service, were never paid for.

After a dinner rather before the usual hour, she proposed to Mary to order to the door a donkey-car, to draw them to the scene of the stone-picking, which was about half a mile from the house, but up a hill that was very painful to Lady Brierly to surmount.

Her ladyship had been all that day most especially captious and cross. Rumours had reached her, that Charles Burleigh had been seen wandering about Roughley, and that Lawrence, her confidential servant, was known to be in

his interests. It was also hinted that the tenants were trying to raise, amongst themselves, a subscription, to enable him to go to Australia, and take with him there his wife and child. Under all these annoyances, the old lady became violently wrathful, and extremely snappish, and very unkind to her companion. Dinner was unavoidably delayed for an hour after she issued the orders for its being served, so that it was nearly two o'clock before it was over.

Mary had had an excruciating headache all the morning, but Lady Brierly did not mind that. The ailments and distresses of her fellow mortals never troubled her. On the contrary, she exerted herself ever and always so as to see that there was no falling off in the duties, that she expected to be performed in her service. Lawrence and the housemaid were, on this especial day, objects of extreme displeasure, and nothing that they could say or do, was satisfactory to Lady Brierly.

There had been a slight shower, about twelve o'clock—one very much wished for by the farming world about Roughley—and that, for a while, appeased the angry feelings of the

old lady ; but it did not continue long enough to satisfy her wishes, so that, by dinner time, she was as wrathful as ever. However, there must be an end to everything, so there was to Lady Brierly's disappointments and annoyances ; and, by the time the work-people had returned from their dinner, she was able to get into the meadow, and exert her authority amongst the girls there assembled, to make them work more heartily and energetically.

For some time Mary followed the old lady up and down, round and about, with untiring patience. At last a man came up to speak to Lady Brierly about some yearlings, which so completely took up her attention, that Mary drew away from her ; and seating herself underneath a beautiful hedge, where the blackthorn was shining with resplendent beauty, in all its pure, fresh, floral beauty, above her head, and taking from her pocket a volume of 'Romaine,' was soon wrapt in complete forgetfulness of all around her.

When next she looked up off her book, Lady Brierly was walking up and down stewarding the girls, who were working away as fast as they possibly could. They threw the stones

they gathered into heaps, that were carried away in barrows-ful by men appointed for the purpose. The eye of Mary suddenly fell upon two women, who, at the moment, crossed a stile in a wall at her side, but at some little distance from her. They came boldly over the stile, and, at once, walked up the meadow to where Lady Brierly was standing speaking to the girls, and exhorting them to hurry. In a moment the women were quite close to Lady Brierly, who, as they approached, turned round in alarm. They were tall, awkward women, with manly gestures and appearance, wrapt in large dark cloaks, with coarse straw bonnets, and thick black veils. As they came up close to Lady Brierly she almost screamed, and turning very quickly round, caught one of the work girls and placing her between herself and the intruders, paused breathlessly for a moment. Suddenly, Mary saw Lady Brierly step away from the girl she had placed between her and the strange women, and running off rapidly and suddenly, fell, as if it were in a faint, utterly powerless. In a moment Mary was on her feet, and her book cast away, and she hurried to assist Lady

Brierly. But ere she could reach her, one of the figures that had so alarmed her strode forward, and pausing over the fallen Lady Brierly, drew forth a pistol, which he applied to her ear, and immediately fired. The shot must have, at once, penetrated the brain of the unfortunate lady; ere a second elapsed, the other figure advanced, and following the example of his predecessor, fired, right down, another pistol upon the recumbent figure of the poor old woman. Both the murderers then stood erect, looked around them, and turning towards the stile at the opposite end of the field, walked off at a rapid pace, without once looking behind them, and leaping over the stile, disappeared immediately from view. Mary rushed forward as rapidly as she could, but ere she reached the prostrate form of Lady Brierly life was extinct.

There was a pause of deep-felt horror all through the spectators of the fearful and appalling scene. No one seemed to dare to speak, till at last, at the urgent entreaty of Mary, a man, who had been trimming hedges, and another who had been managing the work girls, came forward, and raising the poor body from the

earth, turned it face upwards. It was a fearful, appalling sight, the whole skull was literally blown to atoms, and scattered over the ground where they all stood, supporting and gazing at the wretched sight before them.

The earnest entreaty of Mary to pursue the murderers and arrest them were unattended to, and she could, with difficulty, induce any one to run off to the house, to call for assistance, and ride to the neighbouring town for the aid of a doctor and the protection of the police.

However, by degrees, her orders were hearkened to; some of the neighbouring farmers hurried off, in the track of the assassins, others went for doctors, coroner, and police. And poor old Lawrence, the picture of horror and affright, procured a sofa from the house, and with the help of the labourers, carried his murdered lady back to her home, followed by Mary and the poor little girls who had been witnesses of the fearful scene.

The alarm and fright had been so great, that no one had courage or presence of mind sufficient to pursue the miscreants fast enough, so that they easily escaped. There was a large meeting of magistrates that night at

Roughley, in which very little information of any value was gained, but all were unanimous in ordering Charles Burleigh to be seized, and to be placed in custody at once, as the only being likely to be the perpetrator of the horrid crime. The first witness called upon was a little girl, one of those engaged in picking stones; she was close to Lady Brierly when the murderers came up to her, and the unfortunate woman had caught hold of her, and placed her in front, between herself and the intruders, as a safe-guard; the poor little girl, though frightened herself, at the gigantic size of the pretended women and their black veils, had tried to re-assure Lady Brierly, by saying over and over, "don't be frightened my leddy, they are only boys dressed up to frightent the work girls."

The shots must have been instantaneously fatal, as they were discharged literally into her head, as she lay utterly powerless with alarm and fear upon the ground at their very feet. On seeing the place where the murder was committed, the first thing that would suggest itself to the mind was, that a more exposed (and, for the assassins) ill-adapted position,

could scarcely be selected for miles around. The field, which was large, formed the side of a hill, commanding an extensive view—especially, in the direction in which the murderers proceeded; and near the summit of this hill the bloody deed was perpetrated. From it could be seen a large extent of country, flat and mountainous. The road to a thriving post-town was distinctly visible; as were also the cabins of tenants and labourers belonging to Lady Brierly. Her residence, in connexion with which were extensive offices only separated by a shrubbery, was so near that cattle could be seen near it and in the farm-yard quite close to it.

This large field, intended for a meadow, was bounded on the east and west by stone walls, in each of which there was a gate, with a stile alongside; and on the other two by hedges. The murderers were first seen by a person who was in the field—a man who was engaged in trimming the hedges, under the direction and superintendence of the old lady herself. This man saw the assassins coming out of a small plantation on another hill, about a mile off. From their wearing cloaks, he thought they

were, of course, women ; and, having lost sight of them as he proceeded with his work, under the sharp eyes of his mistress, he did not think again of them, nor make any observation about them.

It appeared they came up behind the wall, on the east side of the field ; and, from the marks, which were noted by the police, in the earth close to the wall, they would appear to have advanced to the gate, each on one foot and one knee—the marks being alternately those of a knee and a foot without a shoe. The murder had evidently been planned with extreme care, but perpetrated with extraordinary daring and determination. The disguise worn by the perpetrators of the fearful act was such as wholly to exclude all possibility of any one who saw them being able to identify them. The rapidity with which they had crossed the stile and walked up to their victim, showed a total disregard of all caution that was most astonishing. They had not paused, or looked round them, but advanced in a moment to the object of their blood-thirsty rage ; and, after the committal of the deed, had trotted off immediately, re-crossing

the stile, and having gone down the length of the wall, re-appeared in the hollow, passing close to her house in the direction of the public road. Two masons, building a house at some distance, remarked the murderers before the crime was executed, and said to each other that they were odd-looking women, and that, from their height and gestures, they must be men. However, they had gone on with their work without apprehending anything wrong in the masquerade which the strangers had adopted.

The witnesses were anything but satisfactory in their evidence before the coroner. They were principally the score of little girls that Lady Brierly had with her, picking off the stones preparatory to the rolling of the field. Some of those girls—indeed, more than half of their number—presented an appearance of stolid stupidity and degraded ignorance. One of the eldest of the party, a stout, brawny young woman, apparently under twenty, evinced a manner that gave to the inquirers an idea that she was anxious to conceal everything relative to the matter. She was threatened with committal, at least, half-a-dozen times in the course of the examination, but

persisted in asserting her ignorance of everything.

Another of the stone-pickers gave her evidence with nervous trepidation, which nothing could allay; she was the most intelligent of the group, if she could be induced to speak out. She it was who had been seized by Lady Brierly, and placed before her as a barrier to the nearer approach of the intruders; and who had endeavoured to allay the old lady's fears, by saying—"Don't be frightened, ma'am; they are only boys dressed up to frighten the children at their work."

However, several people were taken up on suspicion of being abettors to the crime. All the known adherents and assistants of Charles Burleigh were arrested; and they were a numerous party—several respectable tenants, many labourers, the carpenter, and poor old Lawrence. The police, under the direction of the magistrates, were most active and unceasing in their inquiries and searches. They could, however, find nothing to assist their scrutiny, excepting a pair of stockings soiled with earth, as if they had been worn in the fields without shoes, and a pistol, which had recently been discharged. An old woman,

who had been walking across the mountains on the evening of the day in which the murder had been committed, found in a thick knot of gorse, a large black cloth cloak, and a veil of coarse black muslin; both of which, on her bringing them to Roughley, were recognized as being some of the articles worn in the disguise of the assassins.

The arrival of Mrs. Dart and her daughters at Roughley, on receiving the intimation of the fearful occurrence, was a great relief and support to Mary. The mutilated corpse had been placed in a shell, and laid in the drawing-room, before they arrived; so that they were spared the shock of seeing the terrible disfigurement, which had shattered the whole of the old lady's head to atoms. They, one and all, agreed with the general opinion, that the foul crime had been the work of the unfortunate Burleigh. Indeed, not a doubt seemed to exist in the minds of any one about it. No clue to him had been discovered, though Mr. Wormley himself had set off in pursuit, aided by the neighbouring magistrates.

The jury consisted of highly respectable and

influential people, and they remained for many days endeavouring to investigate matters, but without any success. On the day in which the inquest opened, the jury proceeded to the scene where the murder took place. One of the gentlemen comprising it sent for a spade, and dug underneath where the brains of the unfortunate lady were found; and there lay a large round bullet, which had passed through her head, buried eight inches in the earth.

The dreadful event created the most intense sensations of horror and alarm in the neighbourhood—indeed, through every portion of the British Isles. Mr. Wormley, who was immediately sent for, was in a dreadful state of excitement, and, with constant lamentations, ceased not to bewail the loss of his patroness, and devoted himself, without any relaxation, to the task of investigation. Mary never saw him in such a favourable view; and she felt a sort of respect for the evidence of so much sorrow and regret, on his part, for some time. And so there was an end of the unfortunate Lady Brierly, more notorious in her fearful end than even in her eventful life.

The woman of enormous wealth and interest, the owner of countless acres, the possessor of an expansive mind and powerful intellect and resolute purpose, who had herself eloquently appealed in favour of her unrighteous cause to the judges of the land, and more than held her own with the opposing talent of the most gifted lawyers, was gone—was but a clod of the valley—a bloody, mangled evidence of the strength of hatred and revenge.

On the first public announcement of the awful affair in the public papers (for Mary had been unable to write), Hardy hastened to Roughley, where he arrived before the termination of the inquest which pronounced a verdict of wilful murder against Charles Burleigh.

Hardy proceeded directly to the house, and was admitted to the morning-room, occupied by Mary and the relatives of the deceased lady. The announcement of 'a gentleman to see Miss Humphreys,' called up the colour to the pallid cheek of Mary, who had to admit him, and receive him, with feigned composure, in the presence of the ladies, Mrs. Dart and her daughters. However, they did not long

remain in the room but hurried away, leaving her, as they thought, to the companionship of 'her brother,' for so he named himself, at once, to Mrs. Dart, to Mary's very great distress and annoyance.

He was shocked at seeing how very ill she looked, and could not be satisfied with her appearance. But the change was not to be wondered at, when one considered her awful state and sad position, on the occurrence of such dreadful scenes as she had been compelled to witness, all alone and unprotected. She was greatly relieved by the hearty fit of crying which she gave way to on seeing Hardy, and anxiously and cordially joined in his wish and plan of removing her as soon as possible from Roughley. Mr. Wormley, with rude impertinence, interrupted the interview, regarding with jealous and scrutinizing eyes the appearance of the intruder.

His looks were returned with haughty contempt by Hardy, who, however, to appease Mary's fears and anxieties, did not long remain on that day, but left the house to lodge in the neighbouring village, as he openly avowed, promising to be at Roughley,

early next day, to settle the preliminaries of his sister's departure.

To avoid all intercourse or interrogatives, she, too, left the room, and did not return to it till late in the evening, when summoned to tea. Mrs. Dart loudly objected to her leaving Roughley at that time. She said it was unkind, ungenerous, and ungrateful for Miss Humphreys to think of leaving her in the midst of so much trouble, with no one able to assist her. Mr. Wormley, too, threw out inuendoes that her departure would not be permitted, as her evidence was of importance, and that should she venture to go away, very unfavourable opinions would be entertained of the cause. However, Mary was deaf to all that was said on both sides, and determined not to remain.

That evening the will of Lady Brierly was opened. There were two executors, Mr. Wormley and Mrs. Dart's only son. It was found that in it she left the enormous estates to her nephew; her large sums of money, and shares in railroads, of which she had many, to her sister, and nieces; with a legacy of twenty thousand pounds to Mr. Wormley himself, who

had drawn up the will some few weeks before. This gentleman was much advantaged by the melancholy death of his patroness, as he had some short time before insured her life for a large sum, and had only paid one year's insurance, when the hands of the murderers put an end to the existence of the insured.

Mary was alone after breakfast the following morning when Hardy entered. She received him with the tenderest affection. He kissed her forehead, and, pressing her to his heart, glanced at her pale countenance with unfeigned alarm. She perceived this, and, therefore, she rallied her spirits, to raise him and comfort him with the idea that his fears on her account were vain. He induced her to wander out with him. They rambled on till they reached the summit of a hill, which overlooked the place which had been the scene of the murder of Lady Brierly. All nature seemed hushed into repose. No sound was heard, but the songs of the birds, rich and wild, which added sweetness and sadness to the feelings inspired by the recollection of what had so lately occurred.

“What a delicious view!” said Hardy, as

they both, for some moments, paused to look around them. "But the ideas of it will be henceforth mingled with feelings painful in the extreme. The fearful end of unhappy Lady Brierly is mysteriously alarming. From my soul, I feel for that unhappy Burleigh, whose provocations to sin were wonderful and many. Still, the voice that spoke the words, 'Thou shalt do no murder,' stirs the heart of every living being to force upon them the imperious necessity to bring the wicked to justice. I fear, Mary, your sentiments towards the wretched man are not in accordance with the ends of justice."

"You are right, Hardy," she replied, in a mournful voice, accompanied by a deep sigh; "you are right; I do feel intensely interested for him—nay, I cannot believe him guilty. You will laugh at me for saying so, but, in truth, I affirm my serious conviction that his was not the hand that killed her."

"Perhaps not his hand, Mary; but surely it was his heart that instigated the perpetration of the crime—it was, without a doubt, his head and brain that planned and induced the murder. Is it possible you can doubt that?"

"Yes, Hardy, I do doubt it. From what I know, and have myself seen of the unhappy man, I firmly believe him incapable of the deed."

"From what you, yourself, have seen of him! What do you mean? Have you ever seen him?"

"Yes, twice; once, the interview was unintentional, on his part, and Lawrence, who had permitted him to enter Roughley without anybody's cognizance, implored me to be silent about the matter. I consented, and, afterwards, Mr. Burleigh purposely threw himself in my way, to thank me. We had some minutes' conversation together, and I affirm that nothing short of his own confession of the fact, will ever induce me to consider him guilty."

"You alarm me seriously, my beloved Mary. I had no idea, that meeting with Burleigh, would be another annoyance to which you might be liable, by residing amidst all the disagreeabilities of Roughley. If the circumstances you speak of were known, you would become an object of suspicion, as an abettor of the assassin; and Lawrence would find it

no easy matter to escape. As it is, I am now quite satisfied at the propriety of his being put into gaol."

"You wrong him, too, very much, Hardy. Rude, uncouth, and gaunt as is the poor old man, he has a true, honest heart, one that feels deep indignation at the brutality which instigated the murder of an unfortunate old woman. I, myself, had a long conversation with him, the night after the murder. He scoffs at the idea of Charles Burleigh having anything to do in the matter."

"Then, why run away from the terrors of the inquiry? If innocent, why did he not come forward to brave the investigation, and prove his truth?"

"Simply, because he left the neighbourhood two days before the murder. I fear he is too often engaged in business connected with defrauding the revenue. He has the name of being joined, ever since his return from India, some few months back, with an unworthy companion of his youth, a smuggler; and Lawrence assures me, in the most emphatic words, that he will not return for six

weeks, and that he is perfectly and entirely ignorant of all that has happened."

"It may be so, Mary, but it seems very strange. As surely as he comes back, he will be captured; and, in all probability, his life will pay the penalty of the suspicion."

"For this cause, poor Lawrence is most anxious to have him warned in time."

"That would be impossible, and very wrong, too. I, myself, cannot acquit the man in my own mind, and I consider it would be very wrong indeed to interfere in any way that would prevent an examination of him."

"I did not know you were so hard-hearted, Hardy," said Mary, with a smile.

"Not hard-hearted, my love, but just and true, I hope. No one can more completely feel for the unhappy man than I do; but, still, it is equally sinful to cloak sin and crime, and conceal it, as to commit it. The evidence already proved against him, would be sufficiently strong to hang him."

"Alas! is it so? Poor creature! I cannot believe him guilty, even though you do. Mr. Wormley is a very detestable man; I have not before spoken to you of him, but now I

must, and tell you I detest him. He is, and ever has been, Charles Burleigh's greatest enemy, and he it is that has completely thrown the whole weight of suspicion on him. He had the impertinence to tell me, yesterday, after you had left, and when I was telling Mrs. Dart of my intended departure from Roughley, that he objected to it, and to say that my evidence would be called upon, in a short time. What reason can he have to say so?"

"Because, perhaps, he has some secret information, relative to your interviews with Burleigh, of which you are ignorant. If you are brought forward, in any way, it will be most distressing."

"Greatly so. But I have no fear, because the few questions that were asked of me were very trifling. I merely had to state the facts to which I was eye-witness in the field, at the time of the murder. I was asked—did I suspect any person in particular? and when I replied that I did not, I was permitted to retire."

"Yes! but the magistrates did not know you had seen Burleigh and conversed with

him, that you had seen him in Roughley House, when he was there without Lady Brierly's knowledge. Were these facts known you would be subjected to a severe cross examination."

"But I do not think they are likely to be known in any way, excepting you, Hardy, intend to call upon me to vouch in evidence what I told you in confidence. But let us forget all about those horrors, and speak of my intended departure. I have had a very kind note this morning from Mrs. Grafton; she is quite satisfied to receive me as a lodger for any time that may suit me. The salary due to me now by Lady Brierly, though reduced to half the original one named by her, will allow me to remain with those kind and worthy Graftons till you can hear of some suitable home, where I may earn sufficient to maintain me."

"And when do you think of removing to Mrs. Grafton's? I should advise as soon as possible."

"Certainly; I think to-morrow. I have nothing to induce my remaining longer with Mrs. Dart and her family, who never treated

me in any kindly way. Their wish for my staying with them now is solely to save them trouble, and assist in regulating affairs of which they think I know a great deal more than I really do."

"Yes. Besides, that Wormley is an impudent, forward fellow, who presumes upon your position to act with impertinent freedom. Is it not so, dearest?"

"Perhaps; but that signifies nothing now. My few moveables shall be sent down to Mrs Grafton's to-night, and I shall write and say I shall be with her to-morrow."

"Let me carry your note, Mary; let me see the persons with whom you are henceforth to be associated. I can make any arrangements you please for you. They should know that you possess friends able and willing to protect you."

"Thanks. I shall write my note and give it you when we return from this to the house."

"My beloved Mary, your self-possession does, indeed, astonish and surprise me. Nothing seems to daunt your moral courage—under all difficulties, your spirit seems elastic, able to rise up against all trials."

“And is it not well for me that it is so?”

“Yes, truly, it is; but I would wish that you would allow me to share in some of your difficulties. It is unkind, ungenerous, to reject all offers of aid, as you do from me, who have a right to proffer it.”

“And surely, dear friend, I never reject it. When I am in distress or perplexity, do I not claim your fraternal assistance at once?”

“No, you do not. Here, now, you will insist again upon seeking for some situation, placing yourself in a dependent position, in order to make the means for supporting yourself, when there is no need. Can you not make up your mind to remain with this old Mrs. Grafton and her daughter, and not again venture into worse than penal servitude, wearying your life and destroying your health with children, or peevish old women? It is a shame for you to pain me thus cruelly.”

“Well, never mind now, Hardy, I shall have plenty of time to think and ponder on what is best while I am with Mrs. Grafton; so we need not quarrel yet.”

As Mary spoke, she started, for she heard a footstep as if receding from where she and Hardy had been seated. A thick covert of gorse lay behind them, in which a person could be concealed with ease. Her look of alarm aroused Hardy's surprise, and he, too, starting up, ran to the top of a small knoll, just over where they were, and he distinctly saw the figure of a man running off, and turning the abrupt angle of a rock. The figure bore a resemblance to that of Wormley, whom he had seen several times, when last at Roughley ; but his disappearance was so rapid that he could not be sure of his identity.

Surprise and emotion at being thus watched and dodged, prevented both Mary and Hardy from speaking for some moments after the alarm. However, in recalling to mind the conversation on which they were engaged, they found that nothing had transpired that could be detrimental to the preservation of Mary's secret. Had it been otherwise, there could be no hope of Wormley's being induced to preserve it.

They walked on in silence. At last Hardy said, with tenderness deep and affecting—

“My Mary, be not alarmed. This man has no power to plague or to annoy you. We have not, by any rash expressions, given him a clue to your real position. He may feel and know that we love each other, far beyond the affection of fraternity, but that is all.”

There was something so earnest, and yet so soothing, in Hardy's tone, that Mary felt irresistibly comforted. They had now reached the summit of a hill, after having slowly ascended from the gorse knoll by a path which commanded a view of extreme grandeur and beauty. The hill on which they stood, steep, rocky, and covered with the fresh green of the young heather, disclosed, in softened majesty, the wild and varied beauties of those romantic mountains which environed them. Far off, in the extreme distance, was seen a boundless ocean, peaceful and sublime, and here and there the faint but picturesque outline of some distant islands, half mingling with the clouds that shone round and about the declining orb of day. All nature was at rest, and both Mary and Hardy gazed in deep and solemn admiration of the beauties they surveyed. Suddenly, and for the first time,

remembering that accumulated hours had passed since they commenced their ramble. The conversation of the long day had increased her affection and esteem, and she felt even less able to withstand the power of his reasoning, and the charms of his society. As they slowly walked homewards, and were entering the house of Roughley, she said to him, with a beautiful smile of utter confidence—

“My dear Hardy, we must part until to-morrow;” and as she said so, she turned away her head. He, in a soothing manner, took her hands.

“My love,” he said, “I know it;” and, as he spoke, he pressed the dear hand he held, and walked on his way sorrowing.

During the remainder of the evening, Mary remained in her room till summoned to tea, and its attendant duties.

Mechanically she entered on all the little minutiae of the meal, but vainly did she wish to repress the painful struggles with herself, that forced themselves upon her as Wormley entered the room late in the evening. Seated at the tea-table, she strove hard to master her feelings. Trembling at the bare idea of being

in any way in the power of such a man as he was, Mary was unable in any way to divert her thoughts, and found herself continually advertg to the late occurrence. At last Mr. Wormley said to her—

“Where is your brother, Miss Humphreys?”

“Gone to his lodgings at Manor Farm, sir.”

“And do you intend to leave Roughley to-morrow morning, Miss Humphreys?”

“Yes, sir.”

“With your *brother*?”

“Yes.”

“For what place do you start?”

“Not farther than Mrs. Grafton’s. I am going there until I hear of a suitable situation.”

“I fear it will be very difficult for you to hear of any situation that may be suitable.”

“Why so, Mr. Wormley?”

“Because every situation that offers, may not be available for you, Miss Humphreys. With warm affections, like yours, and such susceptible feelings, how wounding and corroding must it be to you to be placed in a dependent state.”

Mary slightly winced, but she at last replied, in a firm and steady voice—"That there was nothing she so earnestly desired, as to find a suitable situation, to render comfortable the temporary separation which she was obliged to endure for some time, from her friends and home."

She would have flown from his questioning had she dared; but she could not, so she went on with the employments of the tea-table. But, at times, she could not resist glancing towards Wormley, whose eyes were fixed on her with a reproachful, scrutinizing look, which she could not meet; but she succeeded in assuring herself that she had triumphantly concealed any emotion that might be construed to her disadvantage.

She very soon left the sitting-room to hurry to her own. No comments were made on her hasty exit by Mrs. Dart or her daughters; the fact was, they did not care about her, excepting where their own interest was concerned. And Mr. Wormley had such a command over himself, that he was able to refrain from uttering any of his suspicions. He maintained a mastery over his feelings, and devised an excuse for retiring early to his own room.

He felt madly jealous—wildly infuriated. He had heard enough to assure him that feelings, such as Colonel Hardy's, were not wholly fraternal. With this serious conviction lurking on his mind, he determined to sift the matter, wholly and completely, and discover who and what Miss Humpheys was.

She had turned from wishing everybody good night, and gone through the hall, on her way to her own room, when she was startled by fancying she caught a glimpse of some one on the stairs, above her. For a moment she stood irresolute whether to advance or retreat; then persuaded that she must have been mistaken, she hurried up to her door, not without a little tremor of alarm. She had only placed her hand upon the lock, to turn it and enter, when Wormley stepped forward. His appearance made her heart beat quickly; but she preserved a quiet demeanour, and looked at him. He said, that he 'trusted she had enjoyed her morning's walk with *her brother*?' She replied with dignity that she had. He went on to deride her pretended relationship, in a way that sent the colour to her cheek, and the life-blood from her heart.

“ You can’t suppose, Miss Humphreys, that any one recognizes the young gentleman to be in reality your brother ; because, if you do, I fear you will be mistaken. No, madam, it is all fudge and nonsense ; we men of the world cannot be deceived. By a lucky chance my eyes are opened ; those of Mrs. Grafton, and her well-conducted daughter, too. You will not find it a very easy matter now to gain admittance to them, or shelter under their roof.”

“ Perhaps, not, sir,” replied Mary ; “ but, at all events, every one is liable to disappointment ; and my being refused admittance at Mrs. Grafton’s, will scarcely cause me one annoyance. There are many places much superior to her house where I can be accommodated till it suits me to join my friends and relations.”

The unsubdued tone of Miss Humphreys’ speech, united to her dignified manner, served to command the respect of the insolent Wormley, who said—

“ I beg your pardon, madam, if I have unintentionally annoyed you ; but there are so many people wandering about pretending to be what they are not, that I thought it best to give you a hint of my suspicions.”

Mary continued to regard Wormley steadily, and with composure ; but she did not reply to him ; so he went on.

“ I daresay all may be right with you and your brother, Miss Humphreys, but I fear it ; there may be others that claim a right to you, as well as he does.”

Mary coloured violently ; she attempted to pass on to her chamber ; but that was impossible ; so she said—

“ I think, sir, that you presume upon my patience ; will you permit me to pass on to my room ?”

“ Oh ! certainly, madam. Your contemptuous manner confirms my preconceived opinions of you. I have written to London respecting you ; and, I daresay, the reply to my letter will solve all my doubts relative to you. So you see, my young lady, that I can repay in kind whatsoever treatment I receive.”

“ Sir,” she said, “ it is of very little consequence to me what your opinions are, or to whom you have written relative to me. When one person treats another with impertinence, he must afterwards account for doing so, or apologize for the principles which induced him

to act in opposition to the universally received forms of society ; or, perhaps, give satisfaction for an insult, which no gentlemanly feeling would permit him to offer."

"Indeed, madam," retorted Wormley; "your words are rather high flown for my comprehension. You seem to forget your state and position, wholly and entirely. Scarcely can I confine my indignation within proper bounds. But I shall take care this will be the last time you shall ever insult me. Go, go ! and let the shame, the obloquy, and distress that will overwhelm you, have a salutary effect upon you. You are young enough to amend your evil ways, though to retrieve the friendship and esteem which I proffered you, is impossible. The very idea of your baseness, covered by your imaginary virtue and propriety, makes your idea abhorrent to me."

She did not reply, but again attempted to pass on, which Wormley would not permit. He continued—

"I daresay you will find plenty of pretexts for your conduct, madam. I own, I am myself a little piqued at your seeming so decidedly to prefer the society of your *reputed*

brother to mine. I hoped that I should have been differently regarded by you, but, perhaps, this stranger better insinuated himself in your favour, by the assumption of a fraternal bond which never existed. I should be sorry to breathe a word to his prejudice, but, believe me, his attentions and professions are not of a nature to benefit you or your reputation."

Becoming hopeless of gaining the sanctuary of her own room, Mary leaned against the balustrades of the staircase, and permitted her annoyer to continue his vituperations.

"I am amazed, Miss Humphreys, at your silence ; innocence and truth are ever prompt in answering. And you cannot even call up a blush in vindication ; it would be a novelty, indeed, to see one on your cheek ; I might almost as soon expect to view one, as to see the cheek of a canvass beauty change. Well, it is very fortunate that there is a way of concealing some peoples' blushes, they so often have occasion for them. I hope, Miss Humphreys, that you will not think I make an undue use of my knowledge and information, if I ask a question, and expect an answer to it ?"

Mary bowed ; so he said—

“I shall, then, ask you a plain question, which you must truly reply to.”

But she immediately said, and, as she did so, her voice trembled—

“I know of no question, sir, that I have the power of answering, that can remove any anxiety or curiosity that you can labour under.”

“What!” he replied, “after all the suspicions raised about you, after the rumours that have been spread far and wide, do you think me ignorant of who and what you are? Pardon me, but I do not think you so far above suspicion, as to laugh at it.”

Mary paused ; then she added—

“If I do not answer you, it is because I despise your suspicions, sir, and am far above them.”

“Indeed, madam. I do not care whether you accuse me of unjust suspicions, or not ; time will show who is in error ; but your name is not Humphreys, neither is the gentleman who visits you, *your brother*.”

Mary turned away, deeming a reply unnecessary.

He was evidently puzzled, and said—

“It does not look well to be known, at different times, by different names, and the consequent result of it is prejudicial. Come, I see you acknowledge the truth of all I say; and, as a proof that I am not mistaken, give me your hand.”

She tried to draw back, with evident disgust, from the proffered act. She felt resolute, however, in rejecting it; her spirits and strength were exhausted by this persecution, and, accordingly, she availed herself of an opportunity to rush past Wormley, and retreat precipitately into her chamber, the door of which she immediately bolted. But it was only a transient respite from the odious wretch, and she longed for the arrival of the coming day, that she might escape from the house which held him in it as an occupant.

But, on the following morning, she found herself again intruded upon by Wormley, who said to her, in a voice of fury, as she entered to make breakfast, in the room in which he was.

“Hearken to me, Miss Humphreys, and don’t imagine that you can trifle with my

feelings with impunity I shall never give up my chase after you, or my inquiries relative to you." Darting a look of indignation at her, he threw himself into a chair, and remained silent. The entrance of Mrs. Dart soon relieved her of all fears of being again left alone with him, and she was able to summon up courage to get through breakfast, without any symptoms of alarm at his presence.

Breakfast being over, she rose and turned away to an open window. The morning was lovely, calm, and delicious, and the freshness of the air revived her; for her heart was full of all the sad events that had crowded upon her since she entered that room, and became acquainted with the unfortunate lady now no more. Hardy soon appeared, and she, bidding farewell to Mrs. Dart and her daughters, without vouchsafing a single look to Wormley, passed out of Roughley House, never to re-enter it.

She leant on Hardy's supporting arm, with confidence and affection, and a proud feeling of support, as she passed the window where Wormley stood. The servants ran after to express their humble regrets and good wishes ; -

so that her heart was full, and her eyes moist, ere she reached Mrs. Grafton's pretty cottage.

A gentle knock, and the door, was opened by Mrs. Grafton herself, who threw her arms round Mary with affection, and kindly welcomed her to her humble home. Miss Grafton was in her little study as the party entered it, and she received Mary with a cordial look of pleasure, very gratifying to her. The day was charming, and after Mrs. Grafton's early dinner, which she prevailed on Hardy to share, she proposed walking to the village by a route unknown to Mary. This was an exquisite mountain ramble, very beautiful, and in several places it opened on most extensive views of the surrounding county.

Hardy, who walked close to Mary, and who, with her, felt all the charms of nature with infinite delight, enjoyed the walk beyond expression. The Graftons, too, were people of refined mind and cultivated taste, who equally admired the picturesque scenery through which they led the way.

They walked slowly homeward in the evening, stopping long and often in admiration of the varied prospect. The colour which

softened the cheek of Mary was perfectly lovely, and called forth the admiration of the mother and daughter, who always admiring Mary's beauty, had never seen her so exquisitely beautiful before. The freedom from all restraint, the presence of Hardy, her late painful scenes, all combined to render this evening one of extreme happiness to her. Every moment her gratitude to him, her affection, and increasing admiration of his character, joined to the softening thought of his profound love for her, increased her agitation and emotion. In vain she tried to overcome and conquer the appearance of her feelings, but it was impossible. She had never before evinced her regard and sentiments so forcibly, and she never appeared so agitated by them as on this happy afternoon.

He was to leave the neighbourhood next day; this Mary had made a point of. His regret was deep at the idea of leaving her. He was overpowered with his feelings, as the time for departure drew on, but he strove hard to recover himself before he rose to depart. As he did so, he bade farewell to Mrs. Grafton and her daughter, and, with the warmest energy,

recommended his treasure, as he had previously done on the evening before, after leaving Roughley, to their keeping. He drew Mary with him to the little rustic porch of the rural dwelling. Encircling her with his arm, he whispered deep-meaning words of tenderness, and fervently breathed prayers for her safety and protection. She was composed, and able to appear so, though she did not speak, nor did she venture to raise her eyes to Hardy's face; but, taking his hand, she pressed it to her forehead.

"My love—my dearest, most beloved—how, how can I leave you?—each time we part the separation seems more terrible." He became deeply affected as he spoke; and she clasped more tenderly the hand she held. He continued—"The thought of leaving you now is insupportable to me, without an earthly protector or any comfort, save your own prudence. This Wormley is a dreadful man, I fear; he may now and often annoy you, when you have no one near to guard you from his presumption."

"Do not fear, Hardy, for me—dearest friend. I shall need no protection; God will

guard me. I am not friendless here, nor homeless. I shall be able to manage well."

A pause ensued; and Hardy's looks were bent on her with an expression of the most intense and anxious affection.

"Oh! my Mary, how cheerfully would I lay down my life to restore you to happiness and your own position. But this is not allowed me; even to know of your prosperity and happiness, far removed from me, is denied. We are compelled to live apart; we must disguise all and every feeling of our hearts, and pretend utter indifference, though the result be but misery and sorrow." His eyes were softened almost to tears as he spoke; he added—"You will not forget to think of me then, at those hours we have agreed upon?"

"Forget you! oh, Hardy!"

And she burst into the long-suppressed emotion of bitter tears. He struggled hard against the influence of her grief, and said—

"We shall not be long separated from each other, Mary; and, though absent from each other for a while, we shall, at all events, be united in heart and soul. God bless you, my own beloved,"—and he fondly kissed her again and again.

“Farewell, Hardy—best and truest friend. I look to your promised affection and protection as my only earthly and wished-for comfort and consolation. Adieu! you will not cease to be kept in the fondest remembrances of my heart.”

She tore herself from his grasp; and, rushing to her little chamber, shut herself in it to give way to the powerful emotions that absorbed her.

Next day, and every day, brought a letter to her from him, breathing his affection and anxiety. This in itself was a comfort; and she had others, too, great and many. Mrs. Grafton and her daughter were kind and thoughtful in the extreme, tenderly solicitous for the welfare and happiness of their young friend. She soon found herself completely at home with them, and enjoying calm content, and peaceful quietness—very different to the discomforts of the many months of her weary bondage at Roughley. All was very comfortable and pleasant in the cottage, small as it was.

Mary and Miss Grafton were mutually pleased with each other as they became better

acquainted. But Mary enjoyed better to be alone with her own thoughts, than in the company and society of any being. Her days passed on in unbroken quietness, her first waking thoughts ever directed to Him who guides the affairs of His people with unerring wisdom and love. The hours did not pass in idleness ; she devoted many to her kind friends, aiding in their labours, and adding her meed of help to the requirements of the little household.

Her life, for the first fortnight of her sojourn at the cottage, thus passed ; and, ere its termination, she found in Mrs. Grafton the tenderness of a mother, united with the sincerity of a friend, quite equal from her Christian character and fixed principle of action, to be able to understand and value the mind of Mary. She was a venerable-looking old lady, with hair white and glistening as silver, a benign countenance, and stately, unbent form. She valued habits of order and regular employment, as much as did Mary, who found in her aged friend many points of disposition and congenial sentiments akin to her own. Many of the neighbouring families

that knew and respected the Graftons visited at the cottage; but Mary never, by any chance, was induced to mingle with them. Excepting on Sundays at church, closely covered by a thick veil, she never ventured where she might possibly encounter any one. The frank confidence with which Hardy had avowed to Mrs. Grafton that Mary was not in reality his sister, but the beloved object of his purest and tenderest feelings, won her sympathy and regard at once. Therefore, Mr. Wormley was received rather ungraciously when he called upon the old lady to inform her of her being a victim of misplaced credulity. She merely bowed to him in reply, and said, "That she was fully aware of every circumstance respecting Miss Humphreys, worthy of consideration." And, ringing the bell for her little maid to show him out, left him to his own reflections, completely baffled at his failure.

Mary felt completely domesticated at Mrs. Grafton's. She had formed an idea of disposing of a series of sketches at a neighbouring town. She had confided her plan to Mrs. Grafton, who, strongly approved of it; as, if

it were successful, there would be no necessity of her young friend being obliged to seek shelter elsewhere. The produce of the sale of her drawings would, in all probability, materially assist her means, and permit her to remain where she pleased.

About two miles from the cottage of Mrs. Grafton there was an old and picturesque ruin, situated on a wild and very romantic of the coast, near the entrance of one of Scotland's most magnificent harbours, and facing the Beacon light on the opposite shores. From their position and appearance, these ruins constantly arrested the wandering eyes of curious tourists. Some of the dilapidated towers are ascribed to the era of the Conquest, while others, equally crumbling and indented by the devouring cormorant-time bear symptoms, to the eyes of antiquaries, of an origin hardly less ancient. It was a beautiful old mass, singularly wild and irregular, backed by thickets and stunted trees, spreading far over the cliffs.

Mary was so anxious about her sketches that she did not wish to lose much time before she visited this old castle, and

made arrangements for varied views of it and the surrounding scenery. With the aid of Miss Grafton, she was called each morning at an early hour, and able to get to the scene of her labours often at an hour to permit her catching the first glows of the rising sun, and its accompanying tints. Sometimes, Miss Grafton accompanied her, sometimes a little boy, who attended at the cottage as a juvenile herd, to wait on Mrs. Grafton's solitary cow. He was a fine, intelligent boy, about twelve or fourteen, who was very proud of his task of taking care of such a pretty lady.

One morning she had been up betimes, and had reached the ruin without her little attendant, who, by some means, had been late for his appointment. Fearless of observation and of danger, she arrived, glowing with the exercise of her rapid walk, and was not long arranging herself where a fallen lintel offered a seat commanding an extensive view. The sun had risen over the bay, tinging with inimitable beauty its rocks and cliffs, restoring to view many a rude headland and shaded cave, which had been, for the hours of the night, wrapped in obscurity. The low,

rippling sound of the gently rising tide below her united to the soothing influence of all around her on her mind. An angle of the building, against which she leaned, completely shut her out of sight of any one at the other side of it. She had been drawing nearly half an hour in rapid haste, with masterly touches, when the sound of people approaching close to her, at the other side of the wall, rivetted her attention; at first, she thought the noise must proceed from her little attendant, who was seeking for her through the ruins, and, in consequence, she was just about to call to him, when the sound of a man's voice struck upon her ear. The footsteps of more than one person drew nearer and nearer, till, at last, they paused immediately, close to her, at the other side of the angle of the ruin. She could hear distinctly every word spoken. With intense fear and alarm of being discovered, she sat motionless, hardly daring to breathe, as the sound of Wormley's voice struck upon her heart, and filled her with dismay. He was accompanied by at least two other persons, for she remarked the sounds of an Irish brogue, which she could distinctly

hear at times mingling in dispute with the angry tones of a vulgar Scotchman. For some time she had no power to stir; but, at last, as the conversation between Wormley and his companions increased in interest and importance, she could not resist the temptation to look at the group, and assure herself of their identity.

Laying gently down her sketch-book off her lap upon the ground, she rose noiselessly, and crept to a little distance, where a huge crack in the mouldering walls enabled her to look into the small court, from which she was separated. The figures that she saw within were three in number; and her ears had not deceived her, for Wormley, himself was one of them; his companions were miserably clad, ruffianly-looking beings, who, evidently, were arguing with him on a matter of deep importance, for, at times, their voices were loud and angry, and his was comparatively low and nervously excited.

As the conversation proceeded, Mary started with horror and amazement, and involuntarily recoiled from the aperture, seating herself, however, close enough to it, to hear every

important word that was uttered. She was soon mistress of their conversation ; twenty minutes at the very most, sufficed to give her intelligence of vital import.

She continued quiet until the meeting had terminated, of which she was an unsuspected witness. At length, peace and harmony being re-established between the trio, they issued from their hiding place, pushing their way impetuously, through the fallen and littering stones that strewed the ground, and the thick plants and shrubs that grew in wild profusion. Hardly able to stand up, Mary felt sick and weak, and with difficulty crept to an old doorway, which commanded a view round the castle to some distance. From this point she saw Wormley by himself, walking off at a rapid pace ; but, as if the earth opened and swallowed them up, there was no appearance of the other men. So Mary determined to creep to a distant part of the ruin, and remain quietly secluded for an hour or two. It was fortunate she did so, as in about half that time, she distinctly heard the hidden persons bidding each other good-bye ; and disappearing in different directions, as they

heard the whistling of her little attendant approaching rapidly. Stealing to another direction, she met the boy, and immediately, with him, proceeded homeward.

She quickly sought the comforting advice of Mrs. Grafton, laying before her, wholly, and entirely, the diabolical plan which she had overheard. Wearied and exhausted, she was perfectly unable to sit down to breakfast, which was hardly over, and the breakfast removed, when Mr. Wormley appeared, demanding an interview with Miss Humphreys. This she declined, requesting Mrs. Grafton to see him, and demand his business. The old lady with prompt kindness consented to do so, and went into him, though with anything but kindly feelings.

Wormley was extremely irate when Mrs. Grafton told him, in decided terms, that nothing would induce Miss Humphreys to see him. In vain he entreated, insulted, and raved, it was of no avail; so without leaving any message, he departed from the cottage, vowing vengeance.

CHAPTER VI.

“The Philistines be upon us.”—

THE day advanced, and preparations for dinner at the cottage were making, when a gentle knock was heard at the hall-door. Miss Grafton, who happened to be passing at the time, opened it, and, on her doing so, a note was put into her hand, by a strange boy, meanly clad, and who immediately asked—‘Was that Mrs. Grafton’s house?’ On getting an answer in the affirmative, he turned away, and was quickly out of sight. It was directed to Miss Humphreys, and was as follows.

“I cannot give you any particulars con-

nected with the information which this note conveys, but you, yourself, madam, will be the best judge if they are of any importance. I have, by peculiar circumstances, been delegated to make inquiries about you, and to ascertain very many things relative to you. I cannot, with safety to myself, disclose much; but suffice it to say, that, in consequence of information forwarded to London, you have become an object of suspicion. I must earnestly, and as a grateful friend, entreat you to leave, at once, your present refuge, and seek some other shelter and place of safety; for your pursuers are on your track, and even now may be at hand, to convey you back to England. I cannot, by writing, state more to you; but, should you be able to meet me, this afternoon, on the gorse covert, where, some time ago, you advocated the cause of an unhappy, but innocent man, I will endeavour to satisfy the anxiety you must naturally feel on this subject. May the God who watches over the innocent, bless and keep you, dear Miss Humphreys, and avert the evil that hangs over your sorrowful and unhappy path."

Affected and deeply alarmed by this letter,

poor Mary sat hopelessly holding it, and looking utterly wretched. At first, she fancied that it was an artful plan of Wormley's, to induce her to meet him in a lonely and secluded place, from whence, perhaps, he would carry her off to certain destruction. She remembered the alarm he had caused her and Hardy, on the very spot to which he now summoned her, and where he must have heard her vindication of Charles Burleigh against Hardy's declarations of his guilt. Then she went on to think again, and a fresh surmise, most dreadful, most alarming, rose in her mind, that the letters of Wormley had reached Bulstrode, and that Harold was even then in pursuit of her. She felt utterly unable to come to any conclusion, so she summoned Mrs. Grafton to her little chamber, and laid the important letter before her, for her opinion.

The good woman thought, with Mary's first idea, that Wormley, or his myrmidons, had seen her leaving the ruin, and to prevent her giving information of what had there transpired, had planned this scheme to induce her to venture into his power, and enable him to

put it out of her power to give evidence against him. However, on hearing Mary's anxieties, with reference to the fear and danger of being pursued and carried off, contrary to her wishes and inclinations, by angry relatives, she thought it best for Mary to make a trial and summon up moral courage, and give a meeting to her anonymous correspondent; Mrs. Grafton herself accompanying her to within a short distance, attended by one or two trusty men. This plan met with Mary's approval, who immediately determined that, as soon as the shades of evening crept on, she would hurry to the place appointed, trusting herself wholly to the care of Him, who alloweth not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His knowledge.

As the time approached for the expected conference, the ladies prepared themselves to set out. The walk from the cottage to the place of meeting was nearly three miles, so that a whole hour was consumed in reaching it. It was with a beating heart that Mary parted from her old friend and the two attendants, when within a couple hundred of yards of the furze covert. For several mo-

ments after reaching the seat which she had occupied with Hardy, there was a perfect stillness. Her head seemed quite confused and bewildered by the recent letter and its contents, no less than by the horrible revelations of the morning. It was altogether a trying time to her while she sat in anxious expectation, and a lurking dread of danger, of some fearful sort, made her breathe rapidly, and tremble in every limb.

She looked once or twice at her watch; the hour crept on, and still no one appeared. At last the gorse bushes, immediately near her, were agitated, as if by some one hidden amongst them, and a voice called out, softly, her name. She answered in a similar tone. The voice again spoke.

“Miss Humphreys, retain your place, as I shall do, for I dare not venture to expose myself to any observation; I can speak to you as I lie hidden here. Some few weeks, in this very place, and in this same position, when hiding from my pursuers, I heard you plead in my behalf, and assert your firm conviction of my innocence. I thank you from my soul, I am—I swear it—innocent. Alas! I fear

my innocence will be but a poor defence, for circumstances of weighty import militate against me. But that matters not to you, Miss Humphreys. You can be but anxious for your own safety, which is in no way secure. By some unlucky chance, some of your letters have been received by persons who should not have met with them. A train of evidence has been put into operation, and before twenty-four hours have passed, your relatives will be here in search of you."

Mary could only murmur out her inquiry, how he knew of that. His reply was—

"My safety is in your hands, Miss Humphreys, and a breath from you can destroy me and the few friends I yet possess; nevertheless, I will tell you—for from my soul I trust you fully and implicitly. The post-mistress is a tried friend of mine; her mother nursed me. The tenderest affection, and generous kindness, have ever been shown to me and mine by this poor woman and all her family. The vile hypocrite, Wormley, is known to be my bitter and unrelenting foe, my principal accuser in this fearful murder of the hard-hearted Lady Brierly. He is in

constant correspondence with detectives, who are seeking for me everywhere. On my return, some weeks ago, to this neighbourhood, I found a price set upon my head, and amazing sums offered for my capture. Nevertheless, I have been uncaught, unfound, hidden and supported by old friends and well-wishers, who never will believe me guilty. An inspection of suspicious letters, relative to me, and addressed to Wormley, has gone on ever since my return, so that I am well informed on every point, and can keep up with him in all his endeavours to capture me, and overthrow them. This morning, a letter, with the signature of 'Snow' attached to it, passed through the office, for Wormley, acknowledging the receipt of his information relative to a runaway lady, and promising to meet him to-morrow, to secure possession of her by his (Wormley's) aid; Colonel Bulstrode—such is the name—accompanying this Snow. They would have been here as soon as that letter, but Colonel Bulstrsde was not at home. This is all the informotion I have to give, but when I read it, I determined to aid you, if possible.'

Mary's voice faltered, so that she could

hardly speak her thanks. Overpowered with horror and alarm, she bade her kind friend farewell; speaking as she did so, words of the greatest comfort to him. Then rising, she with difficulty walked away, and joined her friend who was waiting for her. A cry of agonizing despair broke from her ashen lips, as she entered the cottage; and all the accumulated terrors of her situation, were made known, fully, and openly, to her friends. She sat unable to do or think of anything but the torturing ideas of her misery. She clung to the knees of Mrs. Grafton, as she threw herself impetuously at her feet, imploring protection from the violence which threatened to overwhelm her. She called upon her by every entreaty of frenzied fear, and tearful despair, to save her from the turbulent, revengeful power, that was about to claim her, and carry her away. She prayed, wept, entreated, till it would seem as if nature could endure no more, and she sank fainting to the earth.

Night was, by this time, glooming rapidly, and the night wind sighed through the trees that surrounded the cottage, with mournful

howlings, as if precursors of a coming hurricane. It seemed as if all stimulus of hope had passed away, and that all and everything was indicative of a coming misfortune.

In the meantime, however, the thoughts of Miss Grafton were not idle, and she was already organizing a plan of safety, for the unfortunate Mary. By degrees she poured the balm of consolation on the wounded heart; and hope once again struggled into life, and filled her breast with comfort and support.

It was some time, however, before Mary could assure herself of the prospect of safety; and she oftentimes gave way to returning bursts of absolute agony, clasping her hands in wild despair, and yielding to terror that almost maddened her. At last, the paroxysms became lighter, and with longer intervals of peace between them; and, at the urgent request of mother and daughter, she laid down to seek a few hours' rest. At a very early hour on the ensuing morning, as soon as the first light of day appeared, Mrs. Grafton, in accordance with a preconcerted arrangement called her daughter and Mary. Not a being,

but the worthy old lady, was up, and she had not gone to bed all night. A cup of coffee and a biscuit, were taken by Mary and her friend; a tender, affecting farewell of Mrs. Grafton, and they proceeded forth out of the sheltering protection of the cottage; Mary becoming once more a fugitive.

There was an old man waiting at some little distance from the house, as they left it; he stood by a strong Shetland pony, which bore a side-saddle; and was evidently prepared, and in readiness for her. Not a moment was lost in saying farewell to Miss Grafton, who tearfully embraced her friend, and seeing her placed on the pony, she returned rapidly to the cottage.

Mary set off at a brisk pace of the little animal, guided by her unknown attendant, with an agitated and miserable heart. Her bonnet was large and her veil was thick, so that the old man could not possibly discern the features of his companion. He was, himself, a good-natured, sunburnt peasant, with but little intelligence; but he had an honest expression of countenance particularly pleasing to her. They toiled on and on, over hills and

streams and wilds, till the sun had risen high in the heavens, and many miles travelled over. At last, towards mid-day, they halted to refresh the pony, and rest themselves till the evening breezes began to breathe their refreshing coolness upon them. They again set forward, pursuing a path which wound through a picturesque valley, and so on till long after sunset. A small hand-basket, which held some sandwiches and wine, with stronger nourishment for her companion, was all that encumbered them, excepting the bag of provender for the pony.

The sun had set in majestic beauty, and the whole western horizon appeared to be a sea of crimson fire, when the travellers came to a very small house, which stood at the junction of three roads, in a wild, uncultivated region. Here her kind old guide informed her, she was to rest that night, and proceed again the next morning on her way. She was hardly able to alight off her little steed, so very stiff and weary was she with the unwonted exercise; but, by the assistance of the woman of the house, she succeeded, and was shown at once, by her own desire, into her

bed-room. It was very clean, and sweet, and fresh, with a large open window, that admitted the perfume of a delicious lilac which grew close to it, and forced its luxuriant branches, loaded with its unequalled flowers, into the very apartment. The bed was temptingly inviting, and Mary could scarcely repress her inclination of using it at once, even before the thrifty mistress of the mansion had prepared her tea. With many injunctions to the landlady, to carefully attend to the wants of her old companion, she found herself, at last, alone. So wearied was she, that she could scarcely command her thoughts, or fix them on her escape once more, from danger and detection ; but, hastily undressing, sought her bed, where she was hardly laid when her heavy eyes closed in slumber, deep and heavy, and her wearied limbs were wrapt in rest and repose.

When she awoke, it was at the summons of the landlady, who told her it was time to rise. Hastily starting off her bed, she rose and hastened her preparations. The old guide had already breakfasted, and the pony was eady ; so that there appeared not a moment's

delay, before she found herself once again seated in her saddle, and urging on the pony in the footsteps of her conductor, who strode on before her, a few paces in advance. They journeyed on the whole day wearily. The heat was excessive, and a thunder shower completely drenched the little party. But, however, they bore resolutely up against all the perils and dangers that threatened them, and, late in the evening, came close to a small fishing village, to which Mrs. Grafton advised Mary to journey, and seek the protection of her sister, who resided there, like herself, an aged widow lady. At the outskirts of this village, Mary was to separate from her faithful guide, and enter it alone. She freely and generously remunerated the old man from her scanty store; and he turned off in an opposite direction, the course which he was to pursue on his return homeward.

With shaking limbs, and nervous trepidation, did Mary walk into the little town, and, drawing out her letter of introduction to look at its address, advanced on in the direction pointed out by a baker's boy, to Mrs. Campbell's lodging. With a trembling hand, she

pulled the hall-bell of a very small, poor-looking house ; on finding that she had reached the proper place, she sent up her letter by the hands of a very delicate little boy, who had answered her summons. A desire for her to walk up was at once followed, immediately on the letter being perused, and she found herself at once in the presence of Mrs. Campbell and the delicate boy, who was her grandson. The welcoming was kind.

“ Poor girl ! you are welcome here, for my sister’s sake,” and, as she said so, Mrs. Campbell kindly took her hand, and placed a chair for her.

Mary only bowed, for she felt her painful intrusion to be into a home of privation. Everything bore the semblance of poverty, but, with all that, there was an air of cleanliness and cheerfulness round and about. Some affectionate inquiries were made for her sister and niece by Mrs. Campbell, but with reserve, which struck Mary as very strange. Some conversation was then carried on, relative to Mary’s arriving at her house, and the strictness and necessity for a secure protection from those seeking for her. A promise was given to pro-

tect and assist Mary, as far as lay in Mrs. Campbell's power, who, at the same time, adverted, in mournful words, to her own very struggling and distressed state, and her inability to act as she could wish to do towards her sister's friend—one who had brought such warm recommendations to her affection.

With the inhabitants of the village Mrs. Campbell had no acquaintance; but, for all that, they were inquisitive and annoying, and were ever making invidious remarks, painfully distressing to her, and mortifying to the innocent boy, whose only protector she was. Under these circumstances, she advised Mary to remain entirely secluded from observation, and not to venture abroad. Her residence in the village was unsuspected and unknown, and, therefore, it would be well that it should continue so. With this advice Mary cordially and gratefully coincided, and she proposed amusing her time and improving poor Edward by giving him regular lessons, during her stay, in many useful things necessary to him. This plan was gladly acceded to by the poor grandmother, as well as by Edward himself, and Mary felt a real gratification in the daily discharge of her

duties as a teacher. The poor boy was naturally clever, but the unkind treatment of his school-fellows, who refused to associate with a boy whose birth was doubtful, roused his feelings to such a pitch of indignation that Mrs. Campbell had been unable to induce him to re-enter the school, or have any companionship with any one; therefore, the tuition of the stranger was most highly valued, and of great importance.

The additional member that had been thus added to Mrs. Campbell's household, was a burthen that Mary could not bear to inflict upon the poor woman. She had still her watch left her, and this she determined to dispose of, the first opportunity, and with the sum thus gained, add to the stinted house-keeping of Mrs. Campbell. By many entreaties the old lady was prevailed upon to negotiate the sale, which, through the medium of the minister of the parish, who was leaving home on business to London, was satisfactorily arranged, and fifteen pounds, about a quarter of the value, received for the valuable watch. This sum was, in part, speedily applied to increase the comforts of the lady of the house,

as well as Edward, and a few necessary articles of wearing apparel purchased for herself.

Mrs. Grafton wrote very often. There had been no letters for Mary since her flight, and the search round and about the neighbourhood of Roughley for her was continued with unabated vigour. Two gentlemen had visited the cottage, to make a strict examination of every one in it, relating to the extraordinary escape, and, without any success or any important information on the matter, had been obliged to depart. Burleigh had been taken prisoner, and was in gaol on the charge of the murder; Wormley being unceasingly engaged in ferreting up information, and intelligence against the unfortunate man. The Darts had received Colonel Bulstrode and Mr. Snow, at Roughley, on their arrival in pursuit, and had given every assistance to those gentlemen in their enquiries and searches. Reports crept on, and gained strength relative to Mr. Snow's attentions to the elder Miss Dart, whose share in Lady Brierly's moneys, investments, and speculations added many thousand charms to those possessed by the young lady herself. These details, and many others, were given by

both mother and daughter, in their kind and comforting letters, which were neither few nor far between.

Mary began to feel seriously unhappy and greatly alarmed at the long and unusual silence of Hardy. Never had he before forgotten or neglected her. She had herself never written to him since the day before she left the cottage, when she had, in utter unconsciousness of her impending flight, written in good and hopeful spirits, a long, long letter to him. But it was strange, and very wonderful, what prevented his doing so; and, especially, as, in his last letter, he had desired her not to write again until he told her where to direct to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

“———The old story.”

THROUGH some reverses of fortune, totally unexpected, Mrs. Campbell's daughter, Edward's mother, had been obliged to accept the situation of governess in a gentleman's family, at some distance from her own happy home. Here she had not long been, when chance introduced her to the notice of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who had been previously married, and whose wife had died rather suddenly, without leaving any family. His fortune was reported to be very considerable, and his person and manners both

so agreeable as shortly to enable him to make an impression upon the innocent and susceptible heart of Miss Campbell; and, though he was his own master, with respect to his actions and wishes, he had many reasons for not liking to have his attentions to the poor, young, unprotected governess known.

His former wife had been highly connected, much more so than himself, and he was persuaded that her family, from its pride and arrogance, would look down upon him ever after if he united himself to a person of inferior rank; in fact, he knew and felt that his demeaning himself to marry a governess, no matter how beautiful and how accomplished she might be, would occasion a total relinquishment of all further intercourse with his aristocratic connexions. But his seductive allurements failed with the object of his admiration; and, finding his blandishments of art, and temptations of wealth, unable to undermine her principles of virtue and rectitude, he so far departed from his original intentions as to marry her privately.

For some time the poor young creature remained satisfied with the reasons her husband

assigned for the concealment of their marriage ; but when, at length, her situation demanded its acknowledgment, and she urged the measure, he protested she must be in a dream, as he was not her husband, and had never been legally married to her. This he thought he could with impunity do, as he had taken good care to put it out of her power to bring forward any proofs of the solemnization of the ceremony.

Finding his affection decreasing—and that, from his base precautions, it was utterly impossible to substantiate her right to a name she now bitterly deplored having ever given herself a title to—she left her husband in anger and in disgust, and returned to her parents.

Great was their surprise at seeing her so very unexpectedly, and in such a painful position. The statement she gave could not be discredited ; they knew her too well to believe her capable of misrepresenting facts. But, while they were convinced of her injuries and wrongs unjustly heaped upon her, they felt, with mingled grief and indignation, that it was impossible for them to redress them. Leaving

their native town, where her father possessed a lucrative and regular employment, they took up their residence, in grief and shame, at a distant village, where they were wholly unknown.

Here, in due course of time, poor little Edward was born ; and the earthly sorrows of his unfortunate mother were terminated by death. She expired shortly after the birth of her infant, with her last breath confiding it to the care and protection of her agonized parents. To describe their heart-rending anguish for the death of their darling child is impossible. When all was over—when the earth had shrouded their fair flower, so prematurely blasted—the wretched father wrote to her cruel destroyer to acquaint him with the melancholy event, and implore his doing justice to her memory by the open acknowledgment of her child as his lawful heir.

To this an answer was received, but not one by any means calculated to appease the resentment of her bereaved father. After expressing himself deeply grieved at the tidings transmitted to him by Mr. Campbell, he proceeded to aver that his daughter had no claims upon

him but what she derived from his love, which he declared was still sufficiently powerful to instigate him to take her child under his protection, but certainly not as one that he ever could openly acknowledge.

Utterly disgusted, and well nigh heart-broken, both Mr. and Mrs. Campbell refused to give up the child to so depraved and despicable a parent. So they struggled on with adverse circumstances and want, till Mr. Campbell left this world of woe and sorrow after a short illness, bequeathing a miserable annuity of fifty pounds a year, all that he possessed, after his death, to his wife and grandson. And so poor Mrs. Campbell and her daughter's son lived on, loving each other beyond all that the world possessed, till the time that gave them the companionship of Mary.

In the mean time the unfortunate Charles Burleigh, the unhappy man, found himself in du-rance vile, a prisoner charged with the fearful crime of murder, and murder, too, of the deepest and most revengeful dye. The verdict of the jury authorized every sentiment of disgust and wrath that could be expressed against him, and histrial, at the coming assizes, was looked forward

to with mingled horror and curiosity by the surrounding neighbourhood.

By himself, unhappy man, in the contemplation of his wretched position, the better spirit within his breast righted itself. Awed by the place and circumstances which surrounded him, his revengeful passions gave way, and his pure nature regained the ascendant over them. His heart, so long callous and hardened, aroused itself from the deep slumber of indifference into which it had fallen by his unhappy position, and it rose refreshed from the shadows which had lain upon it, and darkened its hopes.

His wife, too, so long in the thralldom of a father's iron will, now threw off all restraint of action, and showed the traits of character that had not been before developed. She left her father's house on the announcement, in the papers, of her husband's capture, and sought him in his prison, where he lay forsaken by all and everybody. She was permitted to visit him in his cell, this was against the rules of goal discipline, but her pleading love made her successful, and she gained a permission to go to Burleigh at stated periods.

A proud and happy man was Mr. Wormley,

as the time for the trial of Charles Burleigh, for his step-grandmother's murder drew on. Unprincipled and vicious in heart, he cared not for the sufferings of others. His only drawback from perfect felicity was his ignorance respecting the fate of his victim, Mary. She never left his imagination for a single moment. Her loveliness and grace riveted his thoughts, while his mind captivated by the remembrance of her beauty, could not fix itself upon any other thing.

At last the day appointed for the trial of Burleigh dawned. Not much hope was entertained that he could prove his innocence of the fearful crime. He employed no counsel to defend himself, and all fancied that the requisitions of justice were about to be sternly satisfied.

No cloud, however, remained to mar the feelings that filled the breast of Burleigh, even on that most trying and eventful day. Emancipated by his own conscience, from the fear of guilt, he bore himself with a confidence strange and wonderful. The struggle in parting with his wife, the night before, had been a fearful one, and it was many a long day ere its anguish passed away from the remembrance of her

heart. Their parting embrace called up the memory of their early loves with a purity and force powerful beyond expression.

The dignity and energy of the veteran judge, who presided at the general gaol delivery, was well known and respected. The courts that he attended upon, and in which he pronounced his fiats loved and respected him. At his approach the most lawless trembled, and all hearts expressed sentiments of anxiety and utter dependance on his charges.

The court was crowded to excess in the town where Burleigh's trial was to be judged. The evidence against him was gravely listened to by all around, while the unfortunate young man, himself, bore an air that could only belong to the free and guiltless. Hour after hour sped on and still the counsel for the prosecution produced witness upon witness with testimonies of the most fearful tendencies. The day closed before the case for the crown was over, and Burleigh had to be removed to his prison before the night was set in. His conscience must have been clear and void of offence, for he smiled as he caught the agonized glance of his anxious wife, as he passed out of the courthouse on his way to the place of his incarceration.

And there was revelry that night through all that assize town, regardless of the impending fate of the wretched prisoners that waited for the announcement of their doom—music, dancing, and unwearied gaiety. With a hasty step, and an averted glance, the unhappy wife of Burleigh passed through the streets that night, endeavouring to smother the anguish of her heart, as the unceasing dread of it rose before her. Forgetful of all and everything but the fate before him that she loved, of him for whom she had sacrificed hope and happiness.

On the coming day, she was up and at her place betimes in the dread court-house. She was sick—sick unto death with deep, deep agony of mind. As she seated herself, she felt as if her senses were forsaking her. She saw the court arrayed to judgment. She heard the inquisitorial tones round and about her; and, after a very little while, everything seemed merged into one indeterminable, unintelligible hum. She noted the robes of the judges; she watched the motion of their lips, the gestures of their bodies, and, in almost delirious horror, she retained a memory of the ensuing trial for a little while, until she expe-

rienced a feeling of lapsing into insensibility. Then crept over her the consciousness of a coming swoon—a swoon deep even as that of the grave; then there was an entire forgetfulness of all that followed.

In the meantime the trial proceeded, dragging its weary length slowly and tediously along. What boots it now to recal the sufferings of that prisoner's mind, his doubts, his fears, his suspense. He watched and listened till, tired and wearied, he could do so no more. Looking once again upward, he saw a figure entering the witness-box. He gazed intently to know who it was, but it was closely veiled, and there was a long interval in the continuation of the business of the day—at least, it seemed a very long one to him.

“Is she not exquisitely beautiful?” said one to another, as, at the command of the court, the enshrouding veil of that witness was put up, and the beautiful face of Mary Bulstrode, calm, dignified, and self-possessed, appeared.

“Yes, most beautiful, wondrously so,” was the rejoinder on every side. “Did you ever see such a perfect face?—such an exquisite figure? Who is she? What is she?”

But, hush! she speaks, and there is silence throughout the assembly. Oh, the rich, captivating sounds of that musical voice, the beauty of those deep, dark eyes, the grace of that perfect figure!—they, all and each, told on the heart and senses of the whole multitude in that court-house.

With cheeks deeply flushed, and tears trembling in her beautiful eyes, Mary stood calm and, apparently, collected, till some kindly hand brought her a chair. Turning towards the judge, she seated herself with grace and dignity, and waited for the interrogations which were to be addressed to her, and to which her answers were to be of the utmost importance. Being sworn, and the usual questions preliminary to an examination being asked and answered, the lawyer demanded where she had first seen and known the prisoner, Charles Burleigh.

“At Roughley.”

“Where there?”

“In the back-hall of the house.”

“Did Lady Brierly know of his being there?”

“No.”

"Did you pledge yourself to maintain secrecy relative to the matter?"

"I did."

"Did you ever mention the circumstance again before Lady Brierly's murder?"

"Never."

"Why so?"

"Because I was asked to be silent."

"By whom?"

"By Lawrence, the man-servant, who knew his lady's wrath would be kindled at the admission of an enemy into the house."

"Then you allow that Mr. Burleigh was an enemy?"

"No, I do not. I merely meant that Lady Brierly would be angry at the admission of one whom she considered to be an enemy into her house. I understand she always disliked Mr. Burleigh, and would not permit him to come near her. She, herself, told me so."

"Did you see him again?"

"I did."

"Shortly before the murder, I believe. Pray say how long it was from your meeting him till Lady Brierly's death."

"Perhaps a week—it might be a day less, but certainly not more."

“Did you ever hear Lady Brierly express any fears of Mr. Burleigh’s injuring her?”

“Yes, very often.”

“Did you ever hear any one else express similar dreads respecting the same person?”

“Yes, Mr. Wormley. He often said, in my presence, that Mr. Burleigh was a revengeful, bad man, and would, some day or other, do for Lady Brierly.”

“Did you believe him?”

“I did not.”

“And why?”

“Because I considered Mr. Wormley unworthy of belief in any way.”

“That is a sweeping denunciation, madam. Mr. Wormley has borne a respectable character all his life for honour and honesty—why do you doubt him?”

“The question, sir, is irrelevant to the present matter, I believe; and, therefore, I shall not reply to it.”

“Well, but, madam, it seems strange that you express doubts of a person’s character, and yet refuse to account for those doubts. Have you a personal dislike to this gentleman in any way?”

“ I have.”

“ And why ?”

“ Because he is a man of deep guilt. The stain of blood that he would fain fix upon another may cling more closely to him than is imagined.”

“ You must explain yourself, madam.”

“ I cannot do so more forcibly than by repeating my words.”

“ Do you mean to accuse Mr. Wormley of having a part and share in this murder ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Are you aware that the charge, solemn and grave as it is, madam, will need a full and ample explanation ?”

“ I am.”

“ Then you must show proof of the charge you so rashly make at once.

“ I am quite willing and ready to do so.”

“ Then permit me to demand by what right you criminate Mr. Wormley in this fearful crime ?”

“ Simply because I heard him in conversation with the men whom he bribed to commit the deed. Likewise, I now produce a paper dropped by him near me, when he was not

conscious of my presence. It is a letter appointing the meeting with the murderers, to pay them for the deed."

A thrill of horror pervaded the whole court as Mary spoke, and she handed an open letter to the functionary near her, for the inspection of the judge. It contained these words, written in a hurried way, upon the back of a letter, which bore the direction of Mr. Wormley himself—

"Mike Kennedy and Alic Cameron,—meet me to-morrow week, at seven o'clock in the morning, in the old ruins near the shore. I will bring the needful with me, to pay for finishing the job on the old woman so cleverly. If I can't get to you that day I will surely do so the next,"

"And where did you find this letter, madam?"

"I found it by chance, as I walked with Miss Grafton one evening, late, in a field adjoining her house. Two men passed us quickly and suddenly. I could distinctly note them as they walked on in the moonlight. Shortly after they passed, I put my foot upon that paper, and, unconscious of its contents,

carried it with me back to Mrs. Grafton's house, where, when the candles were brought in, I read it in presence of that lady and her daughter."

"Are they, too, in court?"

"They are."

"Have you any other suspicions connected with Mr. Wormley?"

"Yes."

"You will have the kindness to repeat them."

"Certainly. I have heard Mr. Wormley, himself, speak to those men, whom he appointed to meet him in the ruins of the old castle. I saw him pay them ten pounds each. I heard their squabblings for more, and his angry refusals. I heard them laugh and jest at the poor old lady's massacre, as if it were a piece of amusement to them; and I also heard plans formed to throw more completely the odium of the deed on an innocent man—Mr. Burleigh."

"Can you, madam, give any proof of those things?"

"Yes."

"I fear, vindictive feelings against Mr. Wormley may prompt your evidence. Did he not proffer you his love?"

“ He did.”

“ Why refuse him ?”

“ I am not bound to reply.”

“ Perhaps not; but you are bound to supply proofs of what you have affirmed. Can you deny your being yourself a suspicious person, and that your name is not the one you are usually known by ?”

There was a burning blush visible for a moment; and then, after a pause, she replied—

“ I cannot imagine that my name would make any difference in my testimony. But, as you do ask, I will answer, that peculiar circumstances have compelled me to abandon my own name and take another. I will not reply further.”

“ Not willingly, perhaps; but there are ways by which you can be compelled to give the required information. I trust we may not be obliged to resort to them ?”

“ I care not for any queries you may ask.”

“ I trust, you will obviate the danger of them, and speak out freely and willingly. Where did you hear Mr. Wormley speak of the crime, and where did you see the murderers ?”

“ In the ruins on the shore. I was engaged

in sketching, and heard the whole matter discussed by Mr. Wormley and two men, whom I heard him address from time to time as 'Mike' and 'Alic.' "

"Was it in consequence of the contents of this paper, summoning those men to meet him, that you followed Mr. Wormley?"

"I did not follow Mr. Wormley. I went on my own account, according to my usual practice, to make some sketches of the surrounding coast, under the influence of the rising sun, until I heard the voices close to me, and recalled to recollection finding that note. I did not think of the matter; had I done so, in all probability, I would not have ventured near them."

"Why not?"

"Because I would not have gone any where that I would be likely to meet annoyance."

"Annoyance from whom?"

"From Mr. Wormley."

"And how could that gentleman annoy you?"

"It matters but little to any one why."

"No such thing, madam. You must account for feelings which prompt your dislike

to him, and cause you to make such grave accusations."

"Then, sir, because Mr. Wormley has ever since my first arrival at Roughley made himself most particularly disagreeable and presuming."

"'Presuming'! Well, it can hardly be termed presumption to pay addresses of honourable import to a lady, I think. Were his offers of marriage all the presumption that he showed?"

"No."

This was said with crimsoned cheeks.

"How else did he presume?"

"By impertinently scrutinizing my actions, and daring to express suspicions of my conduct."

"Well, and even if he did, were not those suspicions justifiable, when awakened about one whom he sought to honour and promote by an offer of marriage?"

"I did not consider his offers any way complimentary, or capable of promoting or advancing my honour or respectability; on the contrary."

"That is strange, madam. A person de-

pendent, as you werè, upon protection and support to be derived from a situation as a companion, a paid one, to Lady Brierly, might have valued the disinterested proposals of an independent gentleman, such as Mr. Wormley—a man of character and property.”

“I did not value them.”

“And why not?”

“Because I detested the man; he was free, rude, and presuming, unlike any gentlemen that I ever associated with.”

“Perhaps so; but, still, your acquaintance with gentlemen of his stamp may not have been very extended. I believe, excepting the stranger who lurked about Roughley for weeks after your arrival there, you did not see many others, did you?”

Mary paused to recover breath, but in a moment answered—

“No, I did not.”

“But you allow that you did meet the gentleman to whom I allude, and who was skulking under an assumed name at Roughley?”

“I acknowledge that I did meet a gentleman, and only one, while I was at Roughley,

a very valued friend, who lingered near me for a while, without my cognizance, to assure himself of the respectability of my position at Lady Brierly's."

"You say a 'friend,' was he not received as your brother?"

"Yes."

"In reality was he so?"

"No."

"What then, a lover?"

Mary did not answer, so her tormentor went on in ironical tones.

"You do not reply to that, so as 'silence gives consent,' I will receive yours as confirmation strong. Allow me to ask where that person—that assumed brother—now is?"

"I do not know."

"Not know! that is strange, indeed. Do you not correspond regularly with him?"

"No."

"That is wonderful and strange! How long have you known him?"

"Nearly two years; at least, about twenty-two months, or a little less."

"Not longer? I thought he claimed the privileges of an old friend. You must acknow-

ledge his real name, and his present habitation."

"I cannot do either."

"Why not?"

"Because, to the first part of your query, his name, I will not tell it; to the next, his present residence, I cannot reply, as I do not know it."

"Then have you quarrelled, and mutually resigned all knowledge of each other?"

"No."

"Then, this ignorance appears strange. Where have you yourself been since the day on which you aver you overheard Mr. Wormley and his myrmidons discussing the particulars of the murder?"

"In a distant part of the country."

"Did you leave Scotland?"

"I did not."

"Then, where were you hidden, and why?"

"In the fishing village of ———, with an aged sister of my kind friend Mrs. Grafton, Mrs. Campbell."

"Were you a visitor, or did you give her any remuneration for your living with her?"

"I was nominally as a lodger, but any

remuneration that I could give would badly repay the lady for all the trouble and inconvenience I gave her."

"Were you not a governess before you came to Lady Brierly, as her companion?"

"I was."

"Name your employer."

"I will not."

"Why?"

"Because it is needless to the cause now before the court. The questions I have been asked and have answered, are wholly foreign to the matter of the murder."

"But your character is not; it is necessary for you to prove your title to respectable credence, and, therefore, I demand your proper name, and proper reference."

"If I am unworthy of belief, sir, I must only be contented to remain under the odium of being so; for I shall answer nothing more, excepting what refers to the fearful crime before us."

"You are proud, young lady, and I fear with but little claim to pride. Do you not know that you yourself are an object of suspicion?"

No answer was given.

“Well, I can tell you, you are. You have been traced, under suspicious circumstances, to this country. You barely escaped in time, no one knows how, from the house of Mrs. Grafton, a most respectable lady; and you have remained hidden, until, to suit your own views, and aid a hopeless cause, you have come forward as a witness against Mr. Wormley. Will you deny that?”

“No, I will not.”

“Then, will you have the kindness to look round you, and see if amongst the spectators here assembled, you can descry anyone on whom you can call to speak to your respectability and identity.”

Mary involuntarily turned round to look, and see who the wily lawyer was alluding to. In a moment, she started, and sank into the chair near her, wholly overpowered, totally overcome; for there, with knitted brow, and folded arms, stedfastly regarding her, in haughty triumph and absorbing, deep, deep admiration, stood Harold Bulstrode!

There was a pause throughout the assembled court. All eyes were fixed on the beautiful statue, so suddenly struck motionless. Her

countenance expressed the most intense dread and alarm, and every limb shook as if under the stroke of palsy. The lawyer, after a short pause, said, with a sarcastic tone and meaning voice—

“Well, madam, shall I summon the person you have recognized as an old acquaintance to speak in your behalf?”

She answered not, but covered her face with her hand, and remained silent. When next she looked up, she felt as if in a dream, a fearful one; for Harold was close to her side—nay, his hand was laid on hers. With a violent gesture of indignation, she withdrew it; and, rising from her seat, with a cheek colourless as marble, said to the lawyer who had been examining her—

“Am I required here longer?”

“Well, I believe not, as this gentleman can speak to your identity and certify your real name, there can be no objection to your testimony. This lady’s name, sir, will you please to give it”—

“Mrs. Bulstrode.”

“From whence, sir?”

“Bulstrode Court, in ——shire.”

“ Her maiden name, what was it ?”

“ Bulstrode.”

“ To whom married ?”

“ To me.” The proud self-reliant tone in which the last words were spoken struck upon the heart of Mary bitterly, and with agonizing distinctness. The whole court was thunder-struck ; the name of Bulstrode was known far and wide, and the case of the fugitive wife was one of deep interest to the whole of Britain, and most especially to the gentlemen of the long robes.

Shrinking from his touch, Mary caught at the offered arm of Mrs. Grafton, who, during the late trying scene had come near her. The kind old lady and her daughter were prompt in their movements of removing their friend out of court. Closely followed by Harold and Mr. Snow, they left the court house, and having summoned a carriage to convey the suffering Mary to the lodging which had been engaged for her and Mrs. Grafton, as witnesses in Burleigh’s favour, they drove off, well aware of being followed by another vehicle which contained the pursuers. The drive was a short one, but during its continuance Mary had sunk

into Miss Grafton's arms, in a state of insensibility, from which the exertion and motion of moving out of the carriage into the house and up stairs scarcely roused her for a moment. As soon as they were up stairs, however, Mary came, in some little degree, to herself, and in frenzied appeals of touching eloquence implored protection from her cousin, and safety from his presence. In hurried words she recounted her long sufferings, her years of misery, her utter abandonment of home and friends, her struggling exertions, her escapes, her poverty, her wretchedness, and drew forth tears of sincere sympathy, and words of determined promise to uphold her against all intrusion from both mother and daughter.

The house in which Mrs. Grafton had secured lodgings was one belonging to a stationer, who had a book shop in the under part. Into this shop Harold and Mr. Snow went, and stating an account of matters in a favourable point of view, to the bookseller, gained his interest and support, with permission to make what use he pleased of the shop and the small room behind it, used by the bookseller himself, and his family as a general sitting-room.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Come let me take thee to my heart,
And all my cares resign,
And shall we never, never part,
My love, my all that’s mine.”

HARDY, after parting from Mary, and leaving her, as he hoped and imagined, securely placed under Mrs. Grafton’s kind and hospitable roof had gone to London on matters of much importance, connected with the purchase of some part of his father’s property, which had, years before, been sold in payment of debts, but which now was again in the market. Though the estate lay in Ireland, it was necessary for Hardy to have an interview with its present possessor, who resided in London.

While in the metropolis, Hardy remained

with an old brother officer, an especial friend, who had married happily and resided there. These persons were blessed with a very beautiful child, an only one. He was a splendid boy, and Hardy was his godfather, and very much attached to him. He was a spoilt child—how could he be otherwise?—the sole idol of doting parents, who could not resist the temptation of setting their whole hearts and hopes on him. Hardy would often reason with his friends on the danger of their conduct; but, still, his reasonings were vain, for they neither could nor would attempt to restrain their excessive and injudicious fondness for their beautiful and intelligent boy. It happened, shortly after this little fellow's third birthday, that Hardy went up to town about this purchase, which detained him some days longer than he expected. During his stay at his friend's house, he devoted a long morning to Mary, and wrote, according to custom, a very extended letter. By some chance, the servant entrusted with posting it on its completion never did so.

The evenings of his stay in London were mostly spent with his friend, Captain Martin,

on the water. Both were excellent oarsmen, and the captain was a member of the 'Thames Club,' and master of a capital wherry. Sometimes, Mrs. Martin and her sister would accompany the gentlemen, rowing about until the cool night breezes were wafted over the water, and then turn home. One evening, in particular, the weather was delicious, and the inducement for a boating party very great. A larger boat, with sails, was borrowed, and the party increased, beyond its usual number, by the admittance of a great many young friends. All were happy and merry as they glided over the deceitful element; and none more so, or so loudly joyous, as little Harry Martin, himself, who, in opposition to Hardy's advice, and that of the child's aunt, was taken out with the party.

But who, in this fleeting world, can tell what an hour, nay, a moment, may bring forth? They sailed about as long as there was wind sufficient to swell the tiny sails; and, as they did so, the little boy flung a basket of flowers, purchased for his mother by Hardy, that evening, on their way to the boat, into the river, and then, with bursts of ring-

ing laughter, pointed to the mischief he had done.

His father endeavoured to reach the fragile piece of wicker-work ere the flowers were washed from it, and, in so doing, overbalanced the boat, and, in an instant, the whole party, eight in number, were immersed in the water. Poor Mrs. Martin clasped her child with energy to her heart, and used every exertion to keep him above the surface. In an instant many boats were on the spot, and the struggling party saved, with the exception of Mrs. Martin's child, which had been carried out of her arms by the increasing power of the tide.

As soon as this was discovered, Hary plunged instantaneously back into the river, and was in a moment lost to sight. With agonized fear and fearful shrieks, Mrs. Martin raved and tore her hair in uncontrollable frenzy; while each being in the boat shivered at the idea of the peril of the deed undertaken, in the wild hope of restoring the lost treasure to its parents. For many moments, all was fear, doubt, and alarm; but, at length, rising to the top of the water, appeared the brave

Hardy, triumphantly holding the infant. At once the powerful aid of all the surrounding boats caught the nearly insensible man and his rescued burthen, bearing them in safety, though apparently lifeless, to the nearest point of the landing.

The usual restoratives availed to recal life to the child, and joy to his parents' hearts. It was very long, however, before Hardy came to himself; long faintings followed his first return to consciousness, and it was thought that, in bringing him into the boat, his head had been injured by an oar.

Then, he was ill—fearfully so. Brain fever, long and alarming, threatened his life. His helplessness and debility were, beyond belief, distressing, and he had no power of mind or body to make any exertion. Six weeks passed, before he could sit up in his bed, or hold any converse. Untiring and devoted was the grateful affection that nursed him through this dreadful attack. Mrs. Sutton was sent for, and arrived at a time when his disorder was at the height, and no hopes were entertained of his recovery to health or reason; but a sound constitution and youth helped

him in the battle against death, and with him gained the victory.

The nurses that attended on him, his friends, the Martins, or the physicians, never heard him utter a solitary word, save one—that he spoke unceasingly. During the long night watches, all through the weary days of pain, and frenzied tossing on his sleepless pillow, the one word issued, in tones of every kind and sort, ‘Mary, Mary’ from his parched and fevered lips—‘Mary,’ only and alone.

After many anxious, mournful weeks of fear, the disease took a favourable turn, and the doctors announced that he was out of danger, and would, in all probability, enjoy a perfect recovery. Poor Mrs. Martin’s joy was, at first, like her grief, unbounded; but, by degrees, she felt the afflictions and fears she had endured, work out an exceeding great benefit to her mind, and they taught her to open her heart in prayer and thanksgiving to God, and restrain the affections and feelings for her restored child under proper bounds.

Mrs. Sutton proposed that Hardy should return, as soon as he would be able to travel, to Ireland with her; but to that he would

not hearken. As soon as returning strength of body and mind enabled him to think, his thoughts were fixed on that spot where he had left his heart's treasure, to which he determined to return as soon as he should be able to travel. His illness could not be known to Mary, and, therefore, her anxiety at his unaccountable silence must be great. The necessity, however, for immediate change of air, induced Mrs. Sutton and Mrs. Martin to fix upon a country lodging for Hardy, for a few weeks. The arrangements for moving him were soon made, and the two ladies and Captain Martin accompanied him to Richmond, where they remained for some time, happily watching the returning health, that coloured the wan cheeks of the poor invalid.

And all this suffering and sickness was the cause of Hardy's seeming forgetfulness of Mary. Little did he dream of her cruel state and misery, on the eventful day of Harold Bulstrode's claiming her, in the public assize court. No, poor fellow, he lay upon a couch before the open windows of the rural habitation, he had been that day removed to ; and with all the distressing weariness of languor

and weakness, permitted himself to be fed with some light nourishment, suitable to his state; and which his own weak hands could not convey to his lips.

Day after day crept on, bearing returning health to him, however, as they did so. Little by little, his mind began to be interested in the things of this world. The papers read to him by Captain Martin, at times claimed his attention; how much, may be imagined, when the intelligence of Burleigh's trial was the article selected one morning, by the Captain, as one of deep and absorbing interest to everybody, at the time.

As Captain Martin read on, himself engrossed by what he perused, poor Hardy's agitation and emotion were unobserved. There was the whole account of all and everything connected with the trial.

And there he lay, prostrated by illness, unable to move his aching limbs in hastening to her, the idol of his heart, the treasure of his soul. There he lay, helpless, hopeless, heart-sick; his weakness was great, his heart was troubled; and to the amazement of his friend, he burst into an uncontrollable agony

of tears, and almost hysteric sobbing, impossible to be suppressed.

Amazed and astonished, Captain Martin tried all in his power to soothe and quiet the agitated invalid ; he was unable to do so, till Mrs. Sutton entering the room where he reclined, enquired anxiously into the cause of such sudden distress. Hardy caught the paper, and pointing to the termination of the trial, she saw the name so well and so long known, to all and each at Fortfield.

With affectionate and tender soothings, she endeavoured to console her nephew, of whose devoted affection she had long been aware. With deep interest she perused every word that the paper contained, relative to the subject of the murder and trial. Then, in her off-hand, brusque manner, but kindly feelings, she offered to start at once to the scene of the late transactions, and, by her presence, support and protect their unhappy persecuted friend. Fain would Hardy have accompanied her, but he was unable to do so with safety ; so he consented to the proposal, hoping to be able to follow her in a short time. Very rapid were Mrs. Sutton's arrangements for her

sudden journey ; but, with her, promptness of action, and decision of purpose, were instinctive ; so, by that very night's mail, she started on the Great Northern Railway, on the wings of charity and love.

Late the next night, by incessant travelling, she arrived at the assize town of ——— ; and then, for the first time, she found out that it would be a matter of extreme difficulty to find out Mary, as she knew not by what name she would there be recognized. However, 'where there is a will there is a way ;' and so with Mrs. Sutton. She, early on the following day, proceeded to the gaol where Charles Burleigh had been confined ; and, from the governor of it, easily learned where the late prisoner had been removed to by his friends. Arrived at those lodgings, she found Burleigh had left the town, and no one knew where he had gone to ; but, by dint of questioning and asking, she heard that the lady whose evidence had saved his life, was living at a stationer's shop, to which Burleigh had gone, and sent constantly during his stay in the town, to inquire for her, as she had been very ill.

All this information was very satisfactory so

far; and Mrs. Sutton did not lose a moment in hastening to the stationer's described to her. When there, she found it a matter of very great difficulty to gain admittance, or get any replies to her inquiries. However, she induced the servant, who spoke to her over the chain of the hall-door, to carry a card up to the sick lady. Ere a moment elapsed, the hasty step of the returning maid was heard approaching the door, which being hurriedly unbarred, Mrs. Sutton was admitted into the hall and ushered up to the second flight, where, in a moment after, she caught the agitated Mary to her loving breast with tender and unfeigned affection.

When Mrs. Sutton's loved and valued name appeared to Mary on her card, it seemed to her as if hope, once more unbidden, came to console her. In a moment she was off the couch, ready to embrace her friend, into whose arms she fell, almost fainting.

Her first inquiry was for Hardy; the answer was guarded, as her state would not admit of any sudden or painful alarm. However, by degrees she learned the whole truth; and very truly was she pained at the recital

of so much suffering. His long and unaccountable silence for so many weeks had deeply grieved her ; and she well knew that nothing but an illness or accident would have permitted her to remain so long a time unnoticed by him.

Mrs. Sutton, putting off her bonnet and mantle with the decided air of one who felt herself entirely at home in the sick room of her friend, proceeded in a manner so gentle and kind as to be much wondered at by Mary, who bore in mind each quick, impatient action, and brusque, sturdy tone of olden times, to question her as to her present most distressing position, offering all aid and protection that she could possibly afford her. Mary shook her head in melancholy despondency, as she averred she saw no hope of escape.

“ Then will you agree to live with your cousin, and return to Bulstrode ? ”

“ Oh, never ! If they drag me there again and again, it will be but to hear the same resolve—to pursue a fresh escape. Would I were dead, and at rest.”

“ Come, Mary (for so we always call our dear old Dalton, of past, jolly times), you

must not say that. While there is life, there is hope; and, for my poor nephew's sake, you must not give in yet—it would kill him now, if you did.”

That evening, late, as the four ladies sat together after tea, a note was handed to Mary by the servant that attended her, and who, with scrupulous integrity and fidelity, prevented any one from entering the house, that was either of a doubtful or suspicious appearance.

The arrival of this note was evidently one of painful import. Mary covered her face with her hands, wrapt in profound sorrow. Deep sighs issued from her breast, and sobs, deep and painful, followed each other in quick and rapid succession. Mrs. Grafton, dear old lady, took one hand from the agitated countenance, while, with tender entreaties, Mrs. Sutton asked what new misfortune had come.

Without answering her, Mary placed in her hand the note; it ran thus, in an unequal and agitated hand.

“My child, my Mary, I am here; you will see me, you will hear me, will you not? Oh! you will not refuse me, old, and weak, and miserable, I have come to claim you back to

my lonely heart if you will. I make no terms, I ask for nothing but your returning love and confidence. See me, hear me, and then judge if you can again forsake your old grandfather.'

There was a silence. No one ventured to say a word or breathe an opinion. The influence of that cramped writing, the fervour of its meaning, the old love that filled her heart for that venerable grandfather, was warming in her breast, increasing each moment in strength and power. As the moments crept on those feelings resumed their ascendancy in her mind, and the power of refusing the interview so fervently implored, became gradually weaker and weaker, and, at last, pressing the hand that still retained hers, she whispered to Mrs. Grafton, "write and tell him that to-morrow morning I will see him."

The little band of agitated friends soon induced Mary to seek rest, and retire for the night, to nurse her little fund of strength, by care, against the coming trials of the morrow.

All preliminary matters being attended to, and Sir Aldrich having promised, through the medium of Miss Grafton, not to attempt to intrude Harold into his cousin's presence,

Mary, with a heart almost bursting its bounds, waited for her grandfather to appear. As he entered the door of the little sitting-room that held his heart's darling, he paused one moment at the threshold—he saw her, he extended his arms, trembling with age and emotion, inviting her approach to that breast that, with all its selfishness, and all its faults, loved her so utterly and devotedly—so Mary could not resist the appeal, and, starting forward, was caught in an embrace, the warmth and rapture of which could not have been exceeded.

Tottering to a chair close at hand, he sank into it, with his child kneeling by his side, clasping him in her fond arms, and devouring him with her intent, unaltering gaze. She kissed his worn old hands, and pressed them again and again to her heart; she breathed short, panting exclamations of the most intense love, and the fondness and confidence of past old years drove from her soul every thought of fear, or of suspicion. And he, lost in undreamt-of happiness, basked and revelled in the sunshine that her beloved presence threw over his whole existence—unable to

speak or move, save when he laid his hand upon that beautiful head beneath him, and, casting his eyes to heaven, implored God's richest blessings on his darling.

Hours passed over thus, and neither old man nor girl heeded time as it flew. The tumult of thought, and the agitation of feeling, banished all ideas but those of restored affection. The dominant idea of each was, to stifle all remembrances which past events would give rise to. Not for worlds would *he* intrude one word of painful import on her ear, nor would she seem, by look or tone, to recal one painful circumstance to his memory.

At length, the converse became full; and time was again creeping on, when the faithful Walters sent up to ask for admission to his master and young mistress. The presence of this trusty domestic was a comfort to Mary; she extended her hand in cordial friendship, to the worthy man, with that familiarity of action which her early acquaintance and long association with him warranted; while tears coursed down his cheeks, as once more he rejoiced in her presence. He warned Sir Aldrich, 'that his usual time for seeking rest had come, and

that he respectfully advised him to recruit his health and spirits, by his accustomed mid-day rest.'

In the meantime, Harold remained inactive, safely ensconced in the little dark parlour of the stationer, and watching, without intermission, all that went on in the lodgings above stairs, into which he did not dare to venture. It was with great satisfaction that he perceived the happiness which accompanied his uncle each time he left the society of Mary. He argued well for his own hopes and happiness from that.

It was, nevertheless, a very anxious time for him. He was in fearful suspense.

Unfortunate Harold! a victim to passion and its effects, he was sorely rueing all the misery he had so unsparingly sown, and would have given worlds to command even a small share of his beautiful cousin's regard. Jealousy, too, was gnawing at his heart with unrelenting bitterness, and the very thought of Colonel Hardy was wormwood to his soul. He was afraid even to ask his uncle concerning Mary's health, and trembled with agitation each time the old man alluded to her name.

This state of things could not long continue ; so that, by the end of the third day of Mary's reception of Sir Aldrich, he had 'screwed up his courage to the sticking place,' and said, in an apparently careless tone of voice—

“How is Mary?”

“Well! at least, tolerably so, Harold. More beautiful than ever.”

“Indeed! Well, she always was beautiful. It struck me, in the hurried glances I caught of her lately, that she was paler than in olden times.

“Perhaps so. Her colour may not be as beautifully clear; but there cannot be anything more lovely in creation.”

“No! without a doubt, uncle. I never saw beauty equal to hers, but once—certainly, never to surpass it. There is a natural grace, an undefined majesty of manner, round and about her, that must be unequalled. Uncle, I would give all that this world offers to me to be permitted to make myself worthy of Mary's approval. Induce her to give me a fair trial, and I pledge my life upon the result. I will make her love me yet.”

Sir Aldrich shook his head sadly, but he said—

“Well, Harold, perhaps you might. You know you have, and ever had, my best assistance and most anxious wishes for your success; but I doubt now your power to conquer the feelings engendered against you. I do, indeed; and, on my solemn oath, I swear never to interfere again in the affair. You may work your way, dear boy—from my soul I hope it—but I cannot, will not, further interfere.”

“I do not ask you, uncle. I only ask Mary to permit me to be with her, to see her, and allow her afterwards to form her own opinion and decision relative to the future terms that are to exist between us. That is all I crave from her.”

“And is it come to that, Harold? Are you satisfied to give up your claims upon her?”

“Not to give them up, only to waive them for a time.”

“I doubt, Harold, whether that will suffice her.”

“It may not, sir; but anything that in-

dances her to see me, on any terms, and associate with me, I am satisfied to promise?"

"Yes, satisfied to promise, Harold; but would you be satisfied to abide by that promise?"

"For a time, certainly."

"Oh! that will never do for her; that promise she will not accept. If I am to be invested with powers to treat with her, you must faithfully perform all you promise. If you do not vow that, I will have nothing to say more in the matter. On the very first breach of your word and declarations she would again fly away, perhaps never to return. Then, indeed, I could not survive."

"You may depend upon me, uncle; whatsoever terms you make with her I shall honourably adhere to."

"But, after all, I doubt whether it is probable she will consent to live at Bulstrode, under any terms whatever."

"Well, and what does that matter? Nothing, as far as I am concerned. Her presence can bless a home wherever and what-

ever it may be. To be with her, near her, and about her, is worth ten thousand Bulstrodes."

"Aye, Harold, so it is. But I trust she may be brought to look, even though it be with indifference, on you. Perhaps, she will not even brook your presence near her; if so, what can I do?"

"Do? oh! my dear uncle, you must only do as best you can, provided you never again lose sight of her. I could bear anything but the idea of her being associated with people such as those Suttons, with whom she has so long been living."

"And yet they were kind, generous friends to my poor lost lamb. They are good and worthy people."

"Perhaps so; but they presume upon her disposition, and the position that she held so long in their house. They consider themselves on an equality with her. I hate them."

"Very wrong it is to do so, Harold, Remember that, in her time of want and misery, she had no friends but them. We should never forget that."

“For my part, sir, I never can forget them, or forgive them either. There is a brother, you may remember him at that Irish place where first we traced Mary to. Some fellow of the name of Hardy?”

“And what has he done, that you cannot forgive?”

“Oh! much to make me very mad, indeed. He has been making himself useful to Mary in many ways,—making love, I believe and that, too, not in any bashful strain.”

“Making love, and to Mary!—impossible!”

“Not at all so, I assure you, uncle. Wherever she has been I can trace him. I wonder even now that he is not near her.”

“That is terrible. Are you sure of this?”

“Sure as I am that I am alive. That miscreant and murderer, Wormley, who first gave me the intelligence of her residing with the unfortunate Lady Brierly, warned me of the influence of a stranger, who dwelt for weeks near her, and constantly corresponded with her as a brother. I have found out it was this Mrs. Sutton’s nephew, this intrusive and presuming fellow, Hardy.”

“That must be looked to, Harold; but, for

our own sakes, it must be done secretly. You may be assured that Mary, with all her well-known propriety of mind, would never hearken to love-speeches from anyone while she was your wife."

"Yes, if she did consider herself my wife ; but you know she does not—she laughs and scoffs at the idea."

"She may ; but, certainly, the very consideration of her position, in the eyes of the world, would prevent her allowing anyone to approach her as a lover."

"I doubt that, uncle."

"Then you are wrong, Harold. I do not."

"How is she to be blamed, sir, if her heart feels inclined to this Hardy ? The affections of a being so beautiful and so gifted as Mary, are not to be expected to remain dormant for ever, even though restrained by a knowledge of her peculiar situation."

"But, Harold—her pride—the Bulstrode pride—would be a faithful barrier to those inclinations that might lead her on to evil. She could not forget herself."

"Alas ! uncle, pride forms a very feeble barrier against the workings of passion. Pride

of birth—of position—of name—of reputation—all give way before the workings of the master spirit of the heart—true love; I know it.”

“But, Harold, does she love this man?”

“I know not. But I fear she does.”

I traced him to this place, where the murder was committed; ever and ever he was with her. He was heard to call her his beloved; he was seen to hold her hand, for hours, in his; her looks and words to him were those of fervent affection and devoted regard; when they separated, he was known to imprint kisses on her cheek and brow. He wrote such loving letters, too—I have some of them here in this very room; she answered them, too; but how, I know not. By heavens! it maddens me to repeat such things of her—of Mary—of my wife.”

“Not your wife yet, unhappily, Harold. Oh, that she were! What you say, does, indeed, alarm and surprise me, Harold. Mary’s acting so is beyond belief.”

“Not a bit, sir; as I said before, if she loves him, it is all natural, but the less to be endured by me.”

“Take patience, Harold ; I will see to all this. There can be no fear of danger with my guardianship ever near her. I will permit no intercourse with Colonel Hardy.”

“But she, too, must promise.”

“Well, if you insist on it, I shall name the matter to her, but I strongly warn you not just at present. She should feel herself wholly untrammelled and unfettered.”

“No such thing ; she cannot shake off a husband’s yoke so easily as she thinks. If she braves me much farther, with reference to this Hardy, I shall have no scruples in at once asserting my rights over her obedience.”

“Come, come, Harold, don’t talk so now ; you just promised all that was right and fair, why so suddenly break through your resolves and promises?”

“I do not mean to break through them, sir, if she relieves my mind by promising this one thing on her part. If she says she will not see or correspond with the man, I am sure she will not ; her faith is staunch.”

Well, trust it, Harold, for even a little while. Do not mar the prospect of peace by such outbreaks. Old and infirm, as I am, with one

root upon the brink of the grave, I can look with fear and alarm on those outbursts of passion and rage, which were my curse through my long life. Only just now, when earth and earthly things are fading from my grasp, do I realize the truth of the preacher, 'That all is vanity and vexation of spirit.'"

CHAPTER IX.

“ Hope lives for ever in the human breast.”

THE result of Sir Aldrich's communication was as might be expected, triumphantly successful. On the part of Harold, he promised all humility and obedience to her wishes or inclinations, and a continued absence from Bulstrode, or any place where she was ; until he would be happy enough to gain permission to present himself before her. To this agreement she consented, and arranged to return with her grandfather to her home, and reside entirely with him, unfettered and unbound. There was no allusion made in the agreement, which was duly drawn up, and signed by all parties,

to Hardy; on this point, Sir Aldrich conquered, and overcame Harold's wishes, and allowed the matter to lie over, till a more fortunate season.

The generosity of Sir Aldrich to all and each of Mary's friends in her distress, was unbounded. Valuable and costly gifts of grateful remembrance to Mrs. Sutton, and her children, with loving messages from Mary, were bountifully supplied. A deed of annuity, very acceptable to Mrs. Grafton and her daughter, for their joint lives, was at once executed, and presented. A sum of money sent to Mrs. Campbell for little Edward's advancement. No one was forgotten in the distribution of thanks, and affectionate remembrances.

Mrs. Sutton arranged to accompany Sir Aldrich and Mary, back to England, and leaving them in London, journey homeward to Fortfield. This plan was formed by Mary, with the hope of once again seeing Hardy; a plan of which Sir Aldrich had not the most distant idea; he knew nothing about Hardy's place of residence, of his late illness, or in fact, anything about him, but Harold's jealous dread and dislike. Before the travellers left

Scotland, to start homewards, Mary parted with tender regret, and deeply grateful feelings, from Mrs. and Miss Grafton : who returned to their quiet home, happy in mind, and at ease in their circumstances, through Mary's thoughtfulness, and the old baronet's liberality.

Mrs. Sutton's open-hearted, happy manner, was greatly liked by the old man ; who, for once in his life, felt a real regard for an Irish-woman ; a race of beings, whom, with the male of their species, the proud baronet ever before regarded with feelings of disgust and dislike. The most bigotted of men, he ever had been ; bigotted to every national prejudice, and implacably resentful against Ireland, and the Irish. These sentiments he never took any trouble to disguise, and, in consequence, many were the fears of Mary, that he would forget in what society he now was, and begin some distressing tirades against a country, where she had received such excessive kindness ; and in the presence of one, who was high-spirited to a fault, and apt to take offence. But nothing of any consequence occurred to mar the harmony of the party, who prepared for

the return with every demonstration of pleasure and cordiality.

And Hardy, kind, generous, unselfish Hardy, was he forgotten in that new and undreamt-of happiness? Did Mary pass over without affection, the remembrance of all he had been to her? did her heart swerve from the feelings which possessed it in his favour? No, no; 'true as the needle to the pole,' her heart unchanged, fondly turned to him in all the deep devotion of unaltered love; and his image, and his alone, reigned safely and for ever there, in that pure sanctuary of holy and innocent affections.

As with the feeling of a miser about to lose the treasure he loved more than his existence, Harold remained near, and with his uncle, till his departure. He felt very vexed with himself, deeply, bitterly so, for having made the unrestricted promises that he did; and with eyes of apprehension kept anxiously watching, to avail himself of every opportunity of catching even a glimpse of Mary, as she drove out with Sir Aldrich, or gave him her supporting arm, in short walks in the vicinity of the home occupied by him. There was

nothing to draw her attention to this fact, for he loitered and lurked about, without attempting to come near her. Once, as she turned, with Sir Aldrich, back to the house, for something which she had forgotten, she found herself suddenly face to face to him; for an instant he paused, and looked at her, then profoundly bowing was passing on when he caught, oh! blessed sight, a very slight, but exquisitely proud, and graceful bend, as if in return for the respectful recognition he had offered. No comments were made on the occurrence by Sir Aldrich, but he, too, felt as if the bare act of accepting the bow, was a signal of hopeful import. Still maintaining a mastery over himself, Harold did not presume on the matter, but kept aloof, fearing she might take alarm, and not again receive his distant mark of civility in the same hopeful way.

He felt a deep sense of injury rankling in his heart, as, from a distance, day after day, he caught sight of Mary, smiling happily, with the deepening colour and increasing joyousness inspired by her newly-created hopes and happiness. He felt indignant with her, disgusted with himself, jealous of even Sir

Aldrich's close and constant association with her. Then there was Mrs. Sutton, always brusque, happy, and noisy, he could not bear her, he hated the sound of her voice, and the echo of her merry laugh. She was evidently thinking (he fancied) of her brother, and of his rapture at owning the affections of such a rare and exquisite being as she was that walked or drove by her side continually. That odious Hardy, whose letters, at least, two of them, had been, by foul means, abstracted from the Roughley post-bag, and given up to his inspection. Those atrocious letters, which spoke of Hardy's happiness in holding her affections, of his own unaltered love, and then went on and prophesied years of mutual bliss and rapture, when fate, propitious to their mutual hopes, severed the bond that held her to the hated persecutors of her life. The perusal of these letters, and they were read over and over, and each time with more bitter hatred, served to keep Harold in a continual fever. The end of all his abhorrence and intense abomination was Hardy, the object of all his love and boundless adoration was Mary. She, wholly and alone, filled up

his soul, recalling feelings deep and absorbing. Her features bringing up more exquisitely each time his memories of those parted from earth, long and miserably torn from his affections; her voice sounded on his ear as that of lips long cold in the silent grave, that once to him had breathed but love and harmony. Oh! the exact similitude of each look and action, the carriage of the beautiful head on the exquisite ivory neck, the fall of those lovely shoulders, the proud step of those splendid limbs that trod the earth with such a queenly air—ah! all and each were perfect to his eye, utterly beloved in the inmost recesses of his soul.

But, then, the difference to his heart; where, heretofore, the idol of his senses had lived but for him alone, her living counterpart loathed and detested him now. No answering look of love met his, no secret communion of the heart was dedicated to him, no fond smile was turned upon him, no kindling eye of deep intelligence and sparkling affection rested on him. All was cold, callous, and careless—all was heartless and hopeless. Still he loved on, loved ever, and with a force equal, if not be-

yond that that before enthralled him, with a devouring anxiety and restless unhappiness that gave him no peace or rest. Night and day, each hour and moment his thoughts were fixed on *his wife*—yes! his own wedded wife—his wife, so closely bound to him, yet so utterly separated from his heart. But, still, she was his wife—the laws of his country must and would sanction an act executed with all proper and fitting rules and ceremonies, with the full consent of her only parent, in the presence of the first legal advisers—a marriage solemnized by special license, and by a mitred dignitary of the established church, in canonical hours, and in accordance with every stipulated regulation. There was no loop-hole for her escape—there was no chance that any court could overrule those facts; and, as he thought so, again and again, hope grew triumphant over doubts and distrust, and ‘gaily waved her golden hair,’ to beckon and encourage him.

The absence of Hardy, and the utter silence of and about him, was very strange. Harold had closely questioned Sir Aldrich about him; but the baronet had never heard

his name breathed. This seemed mysterious ; and, therefore, was the cause of raising surmises of a painful description to add to Harold's misery. At times, he fancied that Hardy must be somewhere near, close at hand, hidden from notice and observation, closely watching his beloved—how disgusting was the thought ! So he worried himself with ceaseless espionage and constant watchings ; but all without any good or beneficial result. His mind would have been comparatively happier and more at ease did he know that, all those weeks that the party tarried in Scotland, previous to their return to England, poor, unhappy Hardy was tied to his couch of weakness and suffering, a prey to the most agonizing fears about Mary and the strength of her resolves, in consequence of his sister's daily letters, with accounts of all and every occurrence of interest to him. Poor fellow ! his sufferings were terrible, only to be eased and comforted by the affectionate and hurried notes written by Mary herself, of comfort, condolence, and determined resolution, which his aunt enclosed in each of her long and interesting epistles, interesting beyond expression.

And so things went on, till Mrs. Sutton declared she could no longer remain away from home; and, therefore, Sir Aldrich and Mary determined to offer no more opposition to her wishes, but set off at once homewards. Sir Aldrich was completely rested, and so happy that he had ceased to wish to leave Scotland, and was satisfied to remain there as long as Mary wished to do so. Her anxiety to remain had been caused by her wish to benefit Charles Burleigh, for whom she felt a great interest. His wife and child had left with him after his acquittal, and when the full odium of the murder had been thrown on Wormley, and were residing with his wife's father, whose hard nature had relented, and who had offered the injured young man an asylum in his house, till better days turned up. Those better days had already come, for Sir Aldrich, through some London interest, was so fortunate as to procure him a lucrative employment in the Custom-house of Glasgow, to which place, by the help of the baronet's ever-open purse, he was able to remove his family in comfort and respectability. This matter being happily arranged, there remained nothing to be done for Mary and her friends

in Scotland, so an early day was fixed upon for their departure.

Harold, of course, had the first intimation of the journey. Great was his annoyance, in consequence. As long as they remained where they were, they were near to him, under his observation. He could follow and watch, though at a distance, and disregarded, and he was not hopeless or desolate. Besides, he had his uncle to himself, every morning and evening, for hours ; he could hear everything, and question him freely ; so that he was cognizant of all and everything that went on. Walters, too, was another sure means of information—one that never tired of repeating “how beautiful Mrs. Bulstrode looked, and spoke, and smiled ! How, for the first time, for more than a whole year, she had sung ; and how master wept as she did so, and her own tears fell, too. And, then, how she comforted him, by saying that only for the last year her voice was silent ; for in happy days, at dear Fortfield, she sang continually to please and delight her loved friends there, who were never, never tired of listening to her. Oh ! dear Fortfield, in happy, beautiful old Ireland, where her heart was, and where she longed to find herself again. Then master asked her, if she

could leave him again for any other place, or separate her heart from him? And she answered, 'Oh! no, dear grandpapa, you must come with me to Ireland, to happy Fortfield, and see all and everyone there that I so truly love.' Master had looked grave, and said he thought he was too old for much travelling now; and that, if he contrived to reach Bulstrode once more, he should make up his mind never to leave it. So Mrs. Bulstrode kissed him over and over, and said she would never ask him to stir, she would be happy with him anywhere."

This information was greedily received by Harold. Yes, and much more, too, that he fancied gave him much insight into Mary's ideas and manner of living at Fortfield (that hated, despicable place, where she had so utterly demeaned herself and her family, by eating the bread of dependence). Still, there was not one word, in any way, of Hardy. Had he ever heard her sing? Was he one of the loved memories of 'old Ireland?'

As Mary, one night, went with Sir Aldrich out of her simple lodging, which she had never left, accompanied by Mrs. Sutton, she was aware that some one stood near to the door, resting against a gas-lamp. Immediately on

the opening of the door, the figure started forward, but, on seeing the number that emerged from the portal, it started back into the shade. Sir Aldrich walked on, speaking to Mrs. Sutton, Mary was a step *en arrière*, talking to Walters. The evening, or rather night, was fine and clear, with the fresh light of an early moon beaming down on the pedestrians. Unconscious of anyone following her, Mary went on speaking to the worthy man who attended her; she was asking questions, interesting and varied, about her dear old nurse, Carroll, when she felt that some stranger was close to her. She turned hastily round to see who it might be that thus intruded, and she distinctly saw her cousin. She, at one moment, had an idea of rushing on to demand Sir Aldrich's protection, but the unobtrusive demeanour of Harold gave her no opportunity to do so. Reverentially taking his hat from his head, he said—

“Will you pardon my intrusion? I thought, as usual, that Sir Aldrich would walk home to his house only attended by Walters; and, in accordance with my general custom, I was ready to attend him.”

There was a perceptible inclination of the head, so he ventured to go on.

“Sir Aldrich expects to leave this place the day after to-morrow; I trust his strength may enable him to do so.”

Mary started, for she had noted, with deep anxiety, that the old man looked haggard and worried, but she did not reply; so Harold went on to ask—

“Do you not see him changed?”

“Very much.” She could not refuse to reply to a question concerning the dear old man.

“I thought you would. He suffers very much more than anyone is aware of. I hope his sudden return home may not be too much for his strength.”

“Sudden—how is it sudden? He has been here these six weeks, and seems quite equal to the exertion of returning.”

“Perhaps, you think so; but he is not, in reality. The overwhelming happiness which your presence gives him, has infused an ardour and strength that he really has not.”

“I am deeply grieved to hear this. Not for worlds would I permit him to venture where his strength does not permit.”

“I thought so, and determined to tell you the truth at once. If he moves he ought not to venture far at a time,—say to a distance of some few miles, and rest for some days.”

"I thank you for your candour. I shall not permit him to travel home hastily. I did not know that he was so very weak; he seemed to me astonishingly well."

"I daresay he did; but here is Walters, who knows more of him than you do; he will tell you that, even last night, the dear old man fainted away, from very weakness, after he left you."

And as Harold spoke, he turned to appeal to Walters, who answered at once.

"That he did, ma'am; he was very ill, indeed; and only for Colonel Bulstrode I would have sent to call you."

"And why did you not?"

"Oh! ma'am, the colonel thought there would be no use in alarming you, and you so very delicate already. He attended Sir Aldrich himself, and never went to bed all night."

"That was not right, Walters; my cousin was wrong in allowing me to remain in ignorance of such a distressing and alarming event. I do not know what best to do now."

"If I were to advise you," said Harold, with a most gentle and resigned voice and tone, "I would tell you to venture very gently on your journey—indeed, I would recommend you to

stay for some of those autumn weeks now approaching, at some quiet sea-side place, where the old man may acquire strength of body and mind to enable him to venture homeward."

"Thanks, I shall do as you recommend. Do you think, Walters, this plan the best?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do. Master is not as strong as you think him to be. A month's rest is necessary, at the very least, to him before he goes home."

"Then he shall have it. But I know not what to do with Mrs. Sutton; she must be at home, in Ireland, in ten days."

"Can she not remain longer?" said Harold

"I think not; her nephew is ill—very ill—and she wishes to remove him at once with her to Ireland."

"Indeed! Well, perhaps, these circumstances may induce you to continue your journey as before intended. Sir Aldrich may be able to get through it better than we anticipate."

"Certainly not; nothing shall induce me to hurry him in any way. We must rest on the way for some time; so that, if she is obliged to hurry on, we must separate."

Harold could hardly control the feelings of

rapture with which he heard her speak those words, but he contrived to mutter—

“I daresay that would be the best plan.”

And, turning away, he allowed Mary to approach the doorway of Sir Aldrich's house, which he had engaged for a month or two; and, after tenderly embracing him, Mary permitted the old man to enter; and, on seeing him received by a servant, she, with Mrs. Sutton, and attended by Walters, retraced her steps homewards, unaware of the companionship of Harold, who walked close behind, and remained till he saw her enter her own lodgings.

This was a great and an unexpected triumph. He had so far conquered as to induce her to delay her return homeward, and even resign the companionship of Mrs. Sutton—so far so well. But, unfortunately, when Mrs. Sutton heard that night from Mary that it was dangerous to remove Sir Aldrich so quickly to Bulstrode, she said, that a little delay did not matter to her, that she would write to Mr. Sutton, who was now with Hardy, and tell him the cause of her unexpected delay. Mary was charmed at this, and thanked her dear, dear friend, over and over, for the kindness which prompted this generous forgetfulness of herself, on her account.

A week more passed over before the party stirred ; then the journeys were short and far between. Sir Aldrich felt no fatigue or any annoyance in his transit so far. A beautiful rural spot was fixed upon in Northumberland, for a month's stay, and all promised well and happily. Harold, in the background, travelled with them, never leaving nor separating from them ; but of this they remained in ignorance, though Walters did not.

Hardy, in the meantime, slowly progressed towards recovery ; Mr. Sutton was with him continually ; and the cheering, hopeful letters of his aunt gave him increasing happiness. Day after day the party, in which his heart was centred, were drawing closer and closer —nearer and nearer to him.

Mary, too, realized happiness, present and expectant. Oh ! how her heart fluttered with delight, as each day brought her further on her journey, nearer to London. The weary month of probation had been past, and once again all were journeying homeward. The party had stopped, for the last night of the journey, at a little town near London ; and Sir Aldrich had retired to rest, fatigued and wearied more than usual. Mrs. Sutton had indulged in a siesta of uncommon length ; and

Mary, waiting to get abroad, slipped on a large grey scarf-shawl that lay in the sitting-room, belonging to her grandfather. Thinking she was free from all observation, and that she ran no risk of encountering anyone, she walked out. But this was not the case, her figure betrayed her, and, just as she got beyond the little pleasure-grounds, which lay round the hotel, she beheld a person approaching her.

She directly attempted to draw back, but the advancing party cut off her retreat ; she stopped, and was about to turn round in terror and alarm, but the intruder stepped forward, and caught hold of her arm. She looked up anxiously, and beheld Hardy himself!—once more restored to health and strength, once more encircling her with his arms, in an embrace of the most fervent love and affection, which she not only permitted, but returned.

Hidden from observation, Hardy had reached this last resting-place, on the homeward journey to London, of Sir Aldrich, and, lying incog. had, by an almost miraculous chance, escaped all observation and notice—and, fortunately, was close at hand to descry Mary as she walked out of the little inn, into its pleasure-ground. There was but little light lingering in the heavens, and those secluded shrubberies were

free from all prying curiosity. Thus together, thus alone once more, they walked; and their hearts found no lack of words, wherein to detail and reiterate the sentiments that filled them. It was as if the happiness of a whole lifetime gathered and concentrated itself into that blest hour of pure communion, and interchange of affection. They forgot the existence of the world around them—the existence of those elements of grief and trial through which they had passed. There was only round and about them the glowing beauty of the ‘perfect present.’ Young, beautiful, and captivating, both were to each other the incarnation of pure and perfect love, beyond which there existed nothing. But the time of separating drew near.

“Oh! dearest Mary,” he almost whispered, “will you not continue to prove your unchanged affection, as you have ever done since we formed the bond that has united our hearts to each other?—will you not write often—see me sometimes?”

“Yes, the same as ever.”

“Ah! I doubt that, you will not, perhaps, be permitted.”

“Why not? I fear no restraint; if I did, I would not venture where it would be made

use of. No, Hardy, I return unfettered, free—utterly so.”

“But, alas! Mary, I cannot hope often to see you, whose presence will gladden the hearts of so many in the world. Our association, henceforth, will be cramped and limited; I feel it.”

“Fear nothing, dear friend. I never can change; I shall ever be to you a sister, at least. How could it be otherwise between us?—unkind brother, even to think it! Fate may separate us while on earth; but now, and ever, our hearts and souls will be united by that fraternal union which has been my whole protection, and which I value more than life.”

“Well, I believe you, Mary. You know I leave all my hopes of happiness in your hands.”

“And I receive the trust, promising faithfully to treasure it; I must do so in self-defence, for is it not my own?”

“Where is your cousin, now, Mary?”

“I know not—we left him far behind us, he did not leave Scotland when we did. I hear he goes away, for some years, to Spain.”

“So far, I doubt it, Mary—I do not think he will ever rest, far away from you.”

“From me? you mistake; from Bulstrode, perhaps, he may not like to separate; but, I my

poor self am but a sorry part of the bargain ; he only needed me, till he secured Bulstrode."

"You are wrong, very wrong, Mary ; his love for you now almost reaches lunacy. I have heard of, and about it, from many. Since his return to England, his sole desire has been to win you back, and gain your affection."

"That he never can do."

"All agree that interested motives did prompt his dishonorable conduct, in forcing a child to a base marriage ; but he avers, publicly, his disgust of the action, and all its attendant horrors, and professes only attachment now, as the means for seeking you, and recovering you."

"That sounds well, but not truthfully, Hardy—I know differently. He loved once, truly, fondly ; he acted as a villian, and betrayed the love he won from one very beautiful, I believe, and who was closely connected to us all. She was a descendent of the Bulstrode family. Poor thing ! she fell a victim to her miserable conscience, and died ; but I believe he did love her—no one else."

"Mary, he could not help loving you."

"He knows nothing of me—never shall. Did he love me ten thousand times more than any woman ever was, or could be loved, I would not accept it."

“You may go on as you are, till Sir Aldrich’s death, which, in the natural course of things, cannot be a time very distant. What will you do then?”

“Just as I do now—assert my independence, and hold to it. He will have what he wants—wealth, position, an ancient name, and unbounded control of everything; mine as well as his own, if he chooses to keep it. I have heard that my mother’s and grandmother’s properties together exceed, in value and revenge, those that are hereditary inheritance of the Bulstrodes. This was the bait that lured on Harold to pursue me with such unrelenting energy. The right to it once gained, he cared but little for the being who had been forced to become the means of investing him with such unbounded ‘mammon.’ ”

“But you can demand a dower sufficient to support your rank and station during his life.”

“Yes, if I chose to sue for a ‘separate maintenance,’ as lawyers call it; but that I will never do; I will never present myself before the world, as having any claims on him. Let him have everything. When I die, he can marry, and invest some other victim with what, perhaps, justice should have given me. But enough of this odious subject; it is very late, Mrs. Sutton will wonder where I am.”

"No, she will not ; of that I can assure you."

"Then, she knows you are here?"

"Yes. I saw her for an instant; I told her in one of my last letters, that, if able, I would be here."

"The moon is high in the heavens, and betokens a late hour. Farewell, dearest and best of friends."

She stopped at a short distance from the house. He did not reply to her, but his parting was not the less tender because it lacked words to detail his love, and speak the adieu which his tongue refused to utter.

With cautious and wary steps, Mary entered the inn by the window she had left it by. The curtains were drawn, and Mrs. Sutton was waiting for her. The hour was later than even Mary imagined ; so the ladies were not long until they sought their rooms, without the faintest suspicion being entertained by any one of anything unusual keeping them from their rest ; although Harold was in the house, wrapt in the happy idea of Mary's being in her bed, long before his arrival, which was by a late train that night. Walters, who had been in Sir Aldrich's room all the evening and night, informed him that the ladies were much fatigued, and had dispensed early with

his attendance, that he might the better devote himself to the care of Sir Aldrich, who had complained much of weariness and fatigue that evening, after his arrival.

With the very earliest train, Hardy left the little town, close to which the hotel was where Sir Aldrich was with his party; so that no one knew, by any chance, of his ever being in the neighbourhood, excepting his aunt and Mary.

Sir Aldrich was too weak and ill to travel that day, a very great disappointment to every one but Harold. The idea of being another day under the same roof, and having a chance of seeing, and hearing the voice of Mary, was a source of real delight to him. He had long conversations with Walters, and arranged to go on before the party to London, and remain there, at a neighbouring hotel, till the party left for Bulstrode; then, he would retrace his steps to a town on the borders, where the party had stayed some little time, and try to divert his thoughts, and amuse his mind by shooting. He had made an arrangement for the purchase of a moor of some extent, and imagined that, in its solitary wilds he could best compose his mind, and arrange his plans for the future. His promise of

going abroad he did not intend to put into execution till after the winter, as the uncertain state of Sir Aldrich's health during the exertion and excitement of his journey, made him think that, in all probability, his days on earth were numbered, and drawing to a close.

The following day was an invigorating one, and the old man declared himself to be perfectly able to undertake his journey. Harold was off before them, and before the breakfast hour, and Walters alone saw his departure. On arriving in London, they drove slowly, but at once, to the house engaged for them by the forethought of Harold, who, before their arrival in it, had been there to see that all was ready and comfortable for their reception.

The poor old man bore up much better than in any of the previous journeyings, and met Mr. Sutton with real and unaffected cordiality, very different from the manner he had evinced towards him on the day of his visit to Fortfield. He did not know who Hardy was, at first; but, when he did, he showed no aversion or dislike. This was greatly the effect of the cool and unembarrassed manner in which he and Mary met—a manner so pleasing to Sir Aldrich that he quite forgot all Harold's in-

junctions, and insisted on the two gentlemen remaining to dinner; an invitation most promptly and joyfully accepted.

The next day was to be that of Mrs. Sutton's separation from her friend. She was to go to Ireland with her husband, accompanied by Hardy. It had been originally intended that they were to remain a week in London; but, on account of the illness of one of the children, an earlier return was determined upon, so that they were to bid farewell to Sir Aldrich and Mary, that night. Therefore, it was, that the parting was delayed till a late hour, which warned them of the necessity of departing and leaving the old man to his rest. Mary remained in the drawing-room for some time after their quitting her. Wrapped in thought of him she had separated from, she did not heed the lateness of the hour. She was alarmed by hearing the Pendule chime one o'clock, and, starting up, proceeded to leave the room. As she did so, the closing of the hall-door sounded through the house; and a step hastily ascending the stairs was heard. Surprised, she turned round to see who entered the house so unexpectedly, and without ceremony came up at that late hour, when, to her extreme surprise and alarm, her cousin appeared close

to her. He looked up at her as he came near her with surprise, at seeing her up and dressed at that time of night. She immediately, and with a haughty air, demanded—

“What brought you here, Colonel Bulstrode?”

He bit his lip, and his brow flushed as he replied—

“To see my uncle, madam.”

“This is an unusual time of night to visit him, sir; pray, who admitted you into this house?”

“Myself.” And he showed a latch-key.

“I would advise you to return from whence you came, and that at once. Sir Aldrich needs not your services; should they be required, you shall be sent for.”

“You will pardon, I suppose, my remaining one night to claim my uncle’s hospitality?”

“No, sir, I will not pardon your intrusion here one moment. You have already broken faith.”

Musingly he looked at her for an instant, then said—

“You will excuse my saying that it is rather hard to be turned from my uncle’s house in the middle of the night, and grudged a night’s lodging in it, when others are wel-

comed and loved guests, who have no shadow of a right to intrude themselves here."

"I do not understand you, sir. I do not want or care to do so. Your presence is distressingly painful to me. If you insist on remaining here, I shall order a carriage and leave you in full possession."

"And go to the protection of Colonel Hardy?"

She turned her eyes, full of indignant rebuke, upon him. He was pale, evidently greatly agitated; and she said, proudly—

"I advise you to leave the house."

"Heartless woman!" cried he, in angry tones, as he laid his hand on her arm, "is it not the fear of discovery that makes you dread my presence?"

She stared wildly, but made no reply; he added—

"Your conduct is of no avail, Mary. I have proofs—incontrovertible proofs—of your duplicity. You must be secured against a repetition of folly, disgraceful to your family and to yourself. I will not permit the intrusion of anyone into my family without my permission, when I, myself, am repulsed. This Hardy, with presumption and effrontery, unequalled, has dared to make himself quite at

home here, and has been a welcomed guest ; while I was not permitted to enter into your presence. I will not suffer it."

"By what right do you attempt to find fault with my receiving any guests I choose, sanctioned by my grandfather?"

"By the right which I possess—the right of a husband."

"You have no such right or claim over me, never had, nor never shall. I shall this moment demand Sir Aldrich's protection ; and, if I am not supported in my position, I leave his house and society again, and for ever, never to be duped into false security by faithless asseverations."

She turned to ascend the stairs, but was again prevented by Harold stepping hastily past ; and, putting himself in advance of her, he held her hand, which he again caught for a moment ; she answered in loud and angry tones—

"I will not be obstructed by you, sir. Unhand me this instant—I insist on your not detaining me."

But in vain she insisted and commanded ; he was determined she should listen to him, and she was equally determined she would not. But the sound of voices roused Walters,

who slept in Sir Aldrich's dressing-room, and he hastening out to see the cause of the disturbance, succeeded in alarming Harold from his perplexing annoyance. As Mary looked up, she saw Walters' face above the balustrade, and, called at once to him to rouse Sir Aldrich and acquaint him with the intrusion of her cousin. Harold, much perplexed, and not a little provoked, gave way, allowing her to pass on to her own apartment. In doing so, she commanded Walters to summon a servant, who might order a conveyance to the door for Colonel Bulstrode ; saying that, until his departure, she would remain in her grandfather's room.

There was no alternative left for Harold ; with a haughty step and frown of bitter anger, he descended the stairs ; and, after a while, Walters appeared, to inform his mistress that her persecutor had quitted the house.

The next morning, with grave composure and dignity, Mary went to Sir Aldrich's room, and detailed the annoying circumstances of the last night. She declared that a repetition of Harold's presenting himself to her, would entirely cancel the agreement she had made to remain with her grandfather, and that nothing would induce her to permit any infringement of the treaty she had consented to abide by.

The old man felt really very angry with his nephew, of whose being in London he had not any idea. A solemn promise was enforced by Sir Aldrich, from Harold, that he would not force himself into the house with her again ; for the old man was really frightened and alarmed lest Mary should escape from him again—a misfortune he could not bear to think upon, and, to obviate which, he would gladly do anything, or enforce anything, that she stipulated for.

CHAPTER X.

“Home, that little word of great meaning.”

MARY's joy at leaving London was very great. She was only there sufficiently long for Sir Aldrich to rest. Buoyant with the idea of leaving all annoyance behind her—as Harold had made a faithful promise, in writing, that he would not go to Bulstrode, till summoned there by his uncle—she proceeded on her way rejoicing, and hopeful.

The first friends that she beheld on her arrival, were the dear and valued Mortimers, who, with their precious child—a little one named after herself, Mary—stood upon the steps to welcome her back, as the carriage drove up to the door. There were all the

well-known old servants; conspicuous amongst them, in floods of delighted, happy tears, was worthy Carroll—whose misery, ever since her nursling's flight, had been endless and sincere, whose grief was profound when she was 'lost,' and, now that she was 'found,' her joy was inexpressible.

Delighted with the meeting of so many that she had long loved and valued, and from whom dire necessity had caused her to tear herself away, Mary gave way to the greatest happiness and contentment of mind.

The letters from Ireland—from those whose images were never absent from her heart—came often, and the replies were regular and lengthy. Sir Aldrich was sometimes the bearer of her letters from the post-bag, and the Irish post-marks sometimes elicited remarks from their frequency.

"See, Mary, here is another letter to-day, from your Irish friends; they are determined you shall not forget them."

"That I never could do, grandpapa."

"I suppose not."

"Surely, you would not wish me to forget the kindest friends that anyone ever had?"

"Oh, no, not forget them, but not always to think of them, as you do."

“How so?”

“Oh, in opposition to the wishes of others.”

“Who can care for my thinking about anyone, but your own dear old self, grandpapa?”

“Why, you know Harold does not, he often wished me to tell you so.”

“Did he? well, that would not influence my actions in any way.”

“I am sorry to hear you say so, Mary, you ought to have some little inclination to soothe his feelings.”

“Not one bit, I assure you, sir.”

“That is very wrong. After all he is very miserably situated, an outcast from home; he should be respected in some way. He feels annoyed at the influence those Irish people have over you; yesterday he wrote so to me; here is his letter, if you wish to read it.”

“Thank you, no. But his annoyances are nothing to me.”

“Ah! Mary, they should be so. To please and satisfy you, he remains away, estranged, banished; to please him, you should not have anything to say to Colonel Hardy.”

“And what have I to say to him, that can cause Harold any annoyance?”

“Not much, I hope; but some rumours have reached him, that you know more of him,

and correspond more with him, than becomes your present position.

“I own no position, sir, that hampers my actions in any way. I have a conscience void of offence, and need not care for anything my cousin can lay to my charge.”

“Beloved Mary, I know you are all right, and true-minded; but the world may talk of this man with reference to you.”

“And if it does, I cannot help it. But for him, I should have often been very miserable, during the early part of my exile from home; he pitied and compassionated me in my misery—he helped me in every way that a friend and brother could. From the first moment I knew Colonel Hardy, I lost something of the terrible feeling of forlornness, that oppressed me. It may be thought that I am forgetful of many things, and many friends, but it shall never be said that I can either forget, or be ungrateful, to those who were my only friends. An attachment has been formed for Mrs. Sutton and her family, by me, that never can end but with my life.”

“Oh, to Mrs. Sutton and her family, that is all right, but there is no cause why you should include Colonel Hardy in that affection

“And why not? surely he is one of her family?”

“Yes, but not always with her.”

“He never was from her, while I was in her house. He forms a part of the family most truly esteemed by me. In justice to myself, and with perfect innocence from all misconduct, I might have formed new ties for myself, many times, since I left you, grandpapa. But my heart had been too deeply scarred by the events of early years, to allow me to indulge in any feelings, that would permit me to unite myself, indissolubly, to anyone, at least, while my cousin lives; not that I feel myself bound in any legal way, to him, but out of respect to you, and to myself. I have always evinced a reserve, and shyness of temper, and disposition, that has prevented all impertinent attentions; and I have checked all others, even those most gratifying to me, in the very outset. You may, perhaps, deem me romantic in my affection, and esteem, for all at Fortfield, but I cannot help it.”

“Then you assure me, Mary, Harold has no cause of jealousy towards this Hardy. You do not care, anything in the world, for him, more than for any mere acquaintance?”

“I say no such thing, sir. On the contrary, I am proud to confess an affection, such as I would confer on a dear and only brother, if I had been blessed with one.”

“From my soul, I wish you had, Mary; what an amount of misery would have been saved,”

“Yes, there would. Free from the trammels of wealth and heirship, I might have plodded through life unwatched, and at liberty. My cousin would not, then, have cared to mar my destiny, as his covetousness induced him to do.”

Mary, indeed, felt herself unsatisfactorily situated after some little time elapsed. She was a victim to entreaties and remonstrances from Sir Aldrich, who, as he grew more habituated to the happiness of her society, began to evince symptoms of wishing to compel her to act as he wished.

But, still, with patient long suffering, Mary hoped for better days, hoped on. Oh! this blessed hope is a wonderful gift of God, and the most powerful principle in the human mind. It is the main-spring of action throughout the earth, it inspires courage in all difficulties, and cheers each sorrowing heart.

The good and kind Bouveries were staying with their daughter, Frances, at the vicarage, shortly after Mary's return to Bulstrode. With heavy hearts they had heard of their young favourite's flight, and all the sad term

of uncertainty that dragged on without any tidings of her. And how happy were they at the return to home of the dear fugitive ; as soon as they heard of it they joyfully hastened homeward to meet her once again. What a long time had elapsed since they had met ! how much of grief and sorrow had passed over all, for Mr. Bouverie had consigned to the dust of a foreign land the beloved form of his darling, happy child, Louisa, the life, and joy, and light of his home and his heart. The afflictions of the Bouveries were deep and bitter at this fearful blow to their happiness. The father, with stern decision, strove hard to control his sufferings and agony, and endeavoured to manifest a composure and resignation really unfelt. But oh ! the deep workings of the mother's afflicted soul could not be masked or hidden, they were profound and uncontrollable.

When she saw Mary, it appeared as if some hitherto undreamt-of source of comfort and consolation was opened to Mrs. Bouverie's heart. She embraced her with the most endearing affection, and though bitter tears fell, they gave way to feelings of resignation, and the countenance of the bereaved mother resumed its old appearance of placid resignation.

Tears, too, bedewed Mary's face, as she was caught to the heart of her dear old friend. Mrs. Bouverie laid her hand on the dear head and emphatically blessed her, in the tenderest tones and most affecting words.

Saving their affliction at the death of their sister, nothing could exceed the domestic felicity which enwrapped the Mortimers in its fold. All was well and prosperous with them, and Sir Aldrich had signified his intention of bestowing the large and valuable living of Bulstrode upon Henry, when the death of its present incumbent permitted him to do so. Harold had likewise joined in the promise, so that prospects of future advancement were in view. The dear child, a girl that blessed the vicarage with her happy tones, and bursts of merriment, became an especial favourite with Mary, whose happiest hours were spent in nursing and playing with the precious little darling.

On the first rumour of Louisa Bouverie's danger, Mortimer and his wife hurried off to Genoa, to give to their sorrowing parents precious proofs of their unchanged devotion and sympathy. The beautiful disposition of the young invalid had endeared and her to every member of her family, peculiarly to her youthful brother-in-law.

For herself, Louisa was weary already of life. Disease had undermined all the powers of existence, and she already felt as one tired of the journey appointed for her to travel in this world. She longed to be with the Great Comforter; she yearned to quit the earth, with all its cares, woes, and anxieties, and enter into that glorious eternity prepared for those who love the Lord.

Her death was a sore trial to all and each of her family, and it induced Mr. Bouverie to leave Italy, and return to his own home. His boys were about to enter into various professions, and commence their 'battle of life;' so that no tie or inducement held him, or his afflicted wife, to Genoa. They returned with the Mortimers to England, as soon as Louisa had left earth for heaven, just as the news of Mary's return reached them.

Little Mary Mortimer became a source of exquisite comfort to her grandmother, her little presence seemed to invigorate and breathe new life and energy into the sorrowing lady. The vicarage was all tranquil smiles and peace-breathing happiness, and served to cheer and restore Mrs. Bouverie's mind to its usual tone, for a space after she came to it; but, some time after, her strength began to gradually

decline. She suffered from no definite disease, but grew weaker and paler, and more feeble. Mr. Bouverie would have travelled to the world's end with and for her, but she did not wish to stir from the vicarage, or the society of her daughter.

Mary was continually with her. The sight of her recalled the beloved Mrs. Penelope, and all she, too, had suffered; and she left no exertion that she could make undone, to comfort and support her friend's drooping spirits and sinking frame. Mrs. Bouverie's presence was hailed by Mary with the affection of a daughter, and every irritating and oppressive feeling of her aggrieved heart, was freely laid open to that dear lady, for direction and advice.

With the feeling that her present course of life was one of duty, Mary's heart grew light and free. With cheerful air, and happy countenance, she abjured all melancholy, and devoted herself to cheer her grandfather, and bear with his irritations and distressing annoyances, which, from time to time, broke out; but, animated by a spirit of christian philosophy, which each day enabled her to endure more and more, she bore gallantly up, im-

pressed with the necessity that there was to bear and to endure.

Mrs. Sutton was not forgotten; invited by Sir Aldrich himself to Bulstrode, she and her elder daughters visited Mary in her splendid home. Warm, indeed, was the welcome that awaited them there. The striking magnificence of all about Bulstrode did not fail to strike, and startle, and surprise the kind-hearted Irishwoman, and her feelings were those of unmixed wonder and astonishment, when she entered the magnificent home of the lowly governess.

Sir Aldrich continued to like and enjoy the society of Mrs. Sutton very thoroughly. She was ever and always ready and willing to read to him (for Mary had insisted on Mr. Snow's dismissal)—to listen to his long and interminable stories of years and days long past—to drive him in his pony-chaise—and to devote hours each evening to him over the noisy backgammon-board, of which he was passionately fond, especially when he was himself the successful player—a circumstance which the lady always contrived to allow the evening to terminate with. Therefore, Mary could command time and leisure to ramble at large with the little girls, and, in their innocent

companionship, recal the memories of old, so very dear to her.

But Sir Aldrich remained in happy ignorance of any tidings arriving of Hardy ; and hardly thought of him as in any way connected with Mrs. Sutton. With much tact that lady had managed never to breathe her nephew's name in the old baronet's presence ; and when the children did talk of 'cousin William,' he never imagined that cousin was identical with the odious and detested Colonel.

Harold was in the Highlands ; had been there for months. Some sporting friends had joined him there ; and all were established in a free and easy sort of bachelor-establishment, which gave to them pleasant companionship in the evenings and long nights, while the mornings and days were devoted to unceasing warfare with the game in the neighbourhood. Once he had visited Bulstrode incog., and actually seen his uncle, and inquired into all particulars relative to Mary, without her cognizance or knowledge. She had been, for a day or two, with the Mortimers at the vicarage, and knew nothing of his stay with her grandfather, of two nights and a day. He had left, seemingly, in more hopeful spirits, and returned

at once to 'Blair Athol,' where the sportsmen still continued.

Mary would have wished, with all her heart, to mention to Sir Aldrich the propriety of inviting to Bulstrode both Mr. Sutton and Colonel Hardy, as the time drew near for Mrs. Sutton's departure, and she had said that her husband had arranged to meet her on her way home; but for her life she dared not say one word on the matter; and permitted her valued friend to leave her, without the protecting care of anyone. Mrs. Sutton—though she made no remark on the subject—knew full well how matters stood, and was well convinced of Mary's own feelings and longings. The long conversations and companionship between them, had not passed without confirming the aunt's mind on the positive certainty of her young friend's unchanged and unchangeable affection for her nephew; and she hastened, with hearty goodwill, to assure him of the fact, on her return, and rejoice his heart and soul with tidings of ceaseless interest of, and about, her whom he so hopelessly and so devoutly worshipped. The little girls did not both accompany their mother home to Fortfield; for Mary had pleaded hard, and gained consent, to retain

the affectionate Jane with her till the coming spring ; promising, with all the generous gratitude of her affectionate heart, to herself, to conduct the education of the child as carefully and devotedly as when she was under the sway and tuition of ‘ Miss Dalton.’

CHAPTER XL

"And parted thus, they rest."

A FINE, cheering, frosty morning drew out the band of sportsmen at Blair Athol, to enjoy the exhilarating promise of a day's splendid shooting amongst the magnificent wilds of the beautiful locality in which their shieling was situated. The air was crisp and bracing, but not very cold, as the young men, four in number, brushed through the damp heather, dispersing showers of moisture off each plant they trod on. They were in high spirits; the influence of everything about them was bright and joyous, and their hearts responded to that influence.

Fewell found himself with congenial souls.

All were men of his own profession, serving now, the proprietor of the estate over which they were shooting. They were all men of birth and station, and breeding; therefore, Harold, with all his pride and insolence of bearing, had no possible chance of exhibiting it towards his companions. They were very especial friends of his, brave, clever, and intelligent.

The sport was good, and they pursued it without any cessation till mid-day. Bags of game, full, beyond all belief, were dispatched homeward, to be emptied and brought back with the lunchbox, which was uniformly packed for, and which generally followed them at noon. Early breakfasts, oftentimes hurried and unsatisfactory, were the order of the day: and, therefore, the mid-day meal was always one of great importance to these devoted lovers of grouse and blackcock.

A poor cabin, well known as a good baking-place, was gained, and the rude table it contained was quickly covered with the golden-brown game-pie, and co-urage, which usually furnished the daily fare at Blair Athol. Sundry ominous black bottles peeped out of the baskets, which were promptly disgorged of their contents, and all sat down, jolly and

happy, to their repast. Fortified and comforted by the genial brandy and good fare, they passed some time in lazy idleness, till the dogs, bounding into the apartment, from which they had been kept out, brought the sportsmen to themselves, and recalled them to remembrance of the amusement still before them.

Rapidly hurrying their preparations for a speedy departure, the masters soon emerged from the cabin in which they had been so securely and comfortably housed, and, following their dogs into the open air, commenced their sport with redoubled energy.

Suddenly there was heard a shot! Three of the gentlemen paused as the sound struck upon their ear, for it had been followed by a fearful and appalling shriek. Then there was a silence, a deep, deep silence, and each young sportsman hurried on to join his comrades. One was missing, one of the lately gay and happy group, one companion did not appear to answer to the calls, loud and many, upon his name.

Presently a man appeared to the alarmed trio. He was one of the beaters that accompanied the party. He was pale, deadly pale, and he made a motion with his hand for the

gentlemen to follow him. In a moment, all were by his side ; breathless with agitated alarm, they kept up with him as he strode on, for a few moments, through the thick and tangled heather that lay in his path. At last, they came near to the little cabin where they had eaten their luncheon, and an awful sight presented itself to their gaze.

A prostrate body lay before them, deluged in gore. It was upon the ground ; its eyes, bursting from their sockets, glared at the bystanders, as, one by one, they came up ; the mouth was wide open, showing the teeth, firmly set together by the agency of intense suffering. Whose was that body ? It was Harold's !—yes ! Harold's !—the proud and haughty, the well-known and noble, the great and wealthy Harold's !—aye ! Harold Bulstrode, now but a 'clod of the valley !'

Mute was every tongue, paralyzed was every limb, of those men, who, stupidly, and totally horror-struck, looked upon that fearful sight. The late bright, gay, and joyous companion, the respected and courted associate, the valued and trusty friend—behold him there, stretched on earth, cold, motionless, and lifeless, a fearful sight to look upon. There he lay, still grasping, in utter

unconsciousness the deadly weapon with which, in an inadvertent moment, he had destroyed himself. Yes, for, in a moment's absence of mind, he had incautiously rested the gun upon his foot, as he stood outside the cabin door, wrapped in deep meditation; a sudden noise had caused him to look round, thereby making the deadly weapon slip off to the ground; and the lock being an imperfect one, and only half cocked, the gun went off, the whole charge passing, in a moment, through the head, and scattering the skull and brains of the unfortunate Harold over the whole doorway. In a moment, he sank—as if in a bundle, unfilled by bone—to the ground, smothered in his blood; but, before that proud head touched the earth, life was extinct. The good woman of the homely, humble house also witnessed the tragic event, and, by her screams, drew to the spot some of the attendants, one of whom had given the alarm to the sportsmen.

For many, many moments of deep grief and paralyzed horror, not one word was spoken. No one had power to speak, or think, or order. At last, the three gentlemen raised the insensible body between them, and, by the help of some of the beaters, formed a ghastly procession, and moved on slowly to the shieling

where they all had so happily dwelt together in peace and unity, dispatching a man across the hills to summon a doctor ; though, alas ! they were well aware that no life lingered in the form they bore so tenderly along.

They crossed the very fields, and banks, and streams, that they had on that very day passed with Harold in life and happiness. They trod over the same heather, and skirted close to the very trees that, in the morning, they had likewise seen and touched. The group passed along slowly and sadly, their shadows lengthening in the declining sun, as they carried on the grim and fearful relic, which so late had been their friend.

Upon his own bed they laid him. Then they beheld the terrible ravages which the gun-shot had made in the poor head. One side of the head was blown totally off, and the fragments of it had passed right through the shooting-cap of the unfortunate deceased. One eye was also destroyed, and it was certain that ere the report of the discharge reached the ears of his companions, Harold had been numbered with the dead.

Long, very long, were the consultations of his brother sportsmen, as to the requisite steps to be taken in consequence of the fearful event.

None of them wished to be the bearer of the sad intelligence to Bulstrode. All shrank from the thought and idea of being delegated to carry the woeful tidings. But, at last, one of the party consented to undertake the sad mission, and by early dawn, next morning, was ready to depart.

Sir Aldrich was tolerably well—much better than usual; he had been enjoying the long debate in a morning paper, on a momentous subject of political import, which Mary read to him, when a gentleman was announced. The name was unknown to either the baronet or his grandchild, but Walters, who bore the card to the library, was desired to show the stranger in, and Mary at once left the room.

The stranger entered immediately; he was a fine-looking man, evidently military, but bore a constrained and very agitated appearance. For a moment after he was seated, he remained silent, as if embarrassed, and very nervous. Sir Aldrich addressed a few words of courtesy and common-place conversation to him, thereby hoping to dispel the cloud of restraint which hung over Captain Markley, for so he named himself. At last, however, courage was summoned to his aid; and, little by little, the very terrible and awful intelligence of Harold

Bulstrode's death was delivered with trembling lips, and words of deep emotion.

After this, Sir Aldrich never spoke one word; he sat aghast and horror-struck, unable to comprehend the extent of his great bereavement. His eyes were fixed on vacancy, his breathing was hurried and uncertain, his limbs were powerless, and his proud old heart was broken—ay, indeed, wholly broken.

The violent ringing of the bell, for restoratives, was heard by Mary, who had only left Sir Aldrich on the admittance of the unknown visitor. She hurried at once to the library, where she became aware of the fact of her cousin's untimely and miserable end. The state of the old man was too alarming to allow her any rest for thought, and her fears for him rendered her wholly unmindful of the awful event, which had caused Sir Aldrich's sudden seizure, and her own emancipation.

With difficulty, the helpless baronet was carried to his chamber, and placed in bed; round which, ere night had fallen, doctors, physicians, and apothecarys, beyond number, were collected. He was aware of one thing, one thing only, and that was that Mary, his precious child, held his loved old hand in hers. On the very slightest movement that she made

the old head tried to move upon its pillow, and the loving old eyes turned to her as if in earnest entreaty not to leave him.

And there she sat all that day, and all through the long, weary night, and the dull, tedious next day, watching the failing life that ebbed slowly away from the proud and noble old grandfather. Venerably noble indeed he looked, even on that dying bed, from which not all his pomp and wealth could raise him. His tongue was speechless, but to the last his heart throbbed with love for her, who was all and all to him.

At last, on the eve of the second day from his seizure, a visible alteration in his countenance was perceptible; the dull grey stamp of rapidly approaching dissolution overspread it; there was a convulsive motion round and about the mouth, the eyes became glazed and heavy, while a faint and almost imperceptible voice was heard in the hushed chamber—

“Mary, my beloved, God bless you.”

A deep deep sigh followed, then a hoarse and gurgling sound in the dying man's throat, as the struggling breath for the last time issued forth, to return to Him who had breathed into Adam and his children that spirit which made man a living soul.

And so passed away Sir Aldrich Bulstrode, the last man of his old and noble line. So ended the Bulstrode baronetage. A meek and gentle woman was all that now remained to hold, henceforth, the sway and possession of all and everything pertaining to her lineage. For her, and her alone, all that had been accumulating through ages and unnumbered years, now remained, and was by her uncared for, unvalued, unselfishly and unwillingly accepted.

Life, then and there, became to the mind's eye of the gentle, unobtrusive Mary, only like unto a dreary farce, in which she had been doomed to act a part, with utter indifference to her own feelings and ideas. Her heart was deeply smitten by the crushing agony of the unexpected bereavement; and the rich gifts of fortune now only bore the stamp of their own insignificance; weighing down, with an overwhelming sense of misery, her soul and spirit.

At first she wept violently for the loss she had sustained; and for days she remained almost inconsolable. But, after a little while, there was a re-action, and she passed on to a stage of comparative calm, and resignation.

CHAPTER XII.

“Joy, joy for ever ! my task is done.”

MARY remained at Bulstrode for two months after the sad events in the family, which had deprived her of her grandfather, and released her from the bondage of Harold. There was much to be done, and settled, and her presence was absolutely necessary ; but at the end of that period, she arranged to visit Marseilles, and remain for some time with Madame de Bohn, who resided there with a married son.

On board the steamer which carried her, with Carroll and Walters, to her old and valued friend, everything was pleasing and agreeable. The weather was very fine, and the passage was delightful, so that Marseilles was reached in due time ; and madame with

open arms and beating heart, welcomed to her home with cordial affection, her darling pupil.

Mary was very happy, and fully recompensed for all the fatigues of the journey, when she saw adame looking well and happy once more. She resided with a son who was engaged in business, and whose house was a house of comfort and delight. Madame had never lost her love and affection for the dear child of so many anxious hopes, whose tender mind she had helped to form ; and her love for Mary differed nothing in intensity and devotion, from that which she experienced for her own children.

The quiet and repose of madame's dwelling, and the mildness and salubrity of air did much for Mary, who rapidly recovered health, strength and spirits. The Signora Luigi and her child, too, were also visitors at the same time, to Madame ; so that Mary enjoyed the delight of renewing an acquaintance, with one she had sincerely loved in old, happy days. Months stole quietly away, and Mary forgot in the quiet delight of her friends' society, that all the wealth and responsibilities of her succession, had devolved upon her. At last it was necessary for her to return home, after an absence, in Marseilles, of six months ; and

at her urgent entreaty, madame accompanied her homeward.

Mary was once again at Bulstrode. Her soul overflowed with delight, and thankfulness, at finding herself once more standing on its dear and hallowed soil. Once upon a time, when encompassed by dreads, and fears, and dangers, she had never hoped to see the dear old place again. But lo! she is again there—restored in undoubted possession, and unclouded liberty, to all the beauties of creation, round and about her.

There was no letter all this time from Hardy. Mrs. Sutton continued to write occasionally, but from the return of her little daughter, Jane, to Fortfield, immediately on Sir Aldrich's death, the intercourse with Mary had seemed gradually to decline. Mary wondered in silence, and thought it very strange, that such a change should come over an intimacy so affectionate, as hers with the Fortfield family had been. Hardy's conduct sorely perplexed her, and she became gradually desponding, and low-spirited.

Business calling her to London, some months after her return to Bulstrode, Mary, accompanied by Madame de Bohn, set off for town, where they expected to remain only a few days.

The two ladies attended by Walters, were passing down the wide space at the foot of Holborn-hill, opposite to Farringdon-street, when they were suddenly met by a gentleman, who stopped before them. Mary through her thick crape veil, could not discern who the intruder was, until he spoke; and the sounds of his deep voice assured her that it was Hardy himself, that she saw, and heard. In an instant the veil was cast back off the beautiful and glowing countenance, which it had shrouded, and her hand was evidently offered, and grasped with deep emotion, by her old friend.

Poor Mary could hardly believe her ears and eyes, when the object of her heart's whole affection appeared thus before her. She could only express her happiness by her looks; and, asking for the support of his arm, walk on, endeavouring to suppress her agitated feelings.

And they did walk on long, and in silence; and (as each thought in secret) determined not to make any show or demonstration of their mutual affection. But this could not be; with all his pride and resolution of purpose, to give no sign of urging any claim upon her love and regard, now that she was rich, noble, wealthy, and independent, far be-

yond his most daring aspirations, he could not hold to his purpose, but evinced by his whole manner how deeply agitated, and wholly overcome, he was at seeing her. At last he said, in a constrained tone of voice—

“I did not know you were in London. Seeing your old servant, Walters, I asked him about you, and he pointed to you as you left a shop; I took, therefore, the liberty of recalling an old friend to your remembrance. I trust you will pardon me.”

“Pardon you, Colonel Hardy! methinks you have grown punctilious since last we met.”

“And why not? You cannot now possibly spare time to think of a nobody, such as myself?”

“I have time and inclination, ever and always, to remember my best and kindest friends, even though they do change to me.”

“Change? Well, perhaps, they do—indeed, they must—for you, too, are changed—changed in every way.”

“How so?”

“Oh! I don’t exactly know; but, I suppose, you must be changed. You can no more be satisfied with friends like me.”

“And why not?”

“Because you are now independent of all

and everybody. You have a proud position to support; you have a place in society to maintain, into which you could not wish to intrude humble individuals, like myself."

"I know of no position or place in which I would not be proud and happy to meet my friends."

"But would Mrs. Bulstrode suffer anybody to approach her as in former times? Would she permit the intimacy of years gone by to return?"

"And why not?"

"Oh, simply, because she now is in an altered position."

"And is that position to change all her feelings?"

"Perhaps."

"Ay, perhaps! but not in reality. No, Hardy, the friendship once felt by me, can never change."

"Friendship! that is nothing."

"Well, then, dear brother, love."

"Ah! Mary, what does Goldsmith say?—That it is 'an empty sound—unseen, unknown.'"

"He says truth—truth in every line of that you quote, dearest Hardy. He wrote and detailed unworthy sentiments, which man, in his

proud, selfish arrogance, spoke, but only to be overthrown by the tenderness and truth of faithful, patient woman. The scepticism and unbelief of years was cast aside, never to be recalled, when Angelina's faith, and truth, and love were made apparent to the heart of Edwin. He did not then disdain her—no, he caught her to his heart, and believed her."

There was nothing that could now separate those tried lovers. Fate had, at last, befriended them. They gazed at each other with unalloyed tenderness, and were amply recompensed for all their previous sufferings. A thousand times he questioned her, with all the tender pleadings of love, as to her faith and constancy; while she, calming her agitated spirits, soothed and tranquillized him from his nervous anxiety, till all was peace, and he could fold her to his bosom in the full conviction of the reality of his happiness.

For the very few days that remained for Mary to continue in London, Hardy was a constant visitor, and accompanied her and madame back to Bulstrode. Once there, his happiness was beyond description. With the treasure of his heart he alternately read, sang, conversed, or rambled through delicious and romantic paths; or cantering by her side along

the wild mountain ways, admiring her more and more, gave up his whole soul to the delight which surrounded him.

Mr. and Mrs. Sutton gladly availed themselves of the invitation of Mary, to visit her; and very warmly were they received, as her future and her most valued relatives. She was truly delighted to receive those dear friends, and to evidence by her conduct, her esteem and respect for those who had so greatly promoted her comfort and happiness.

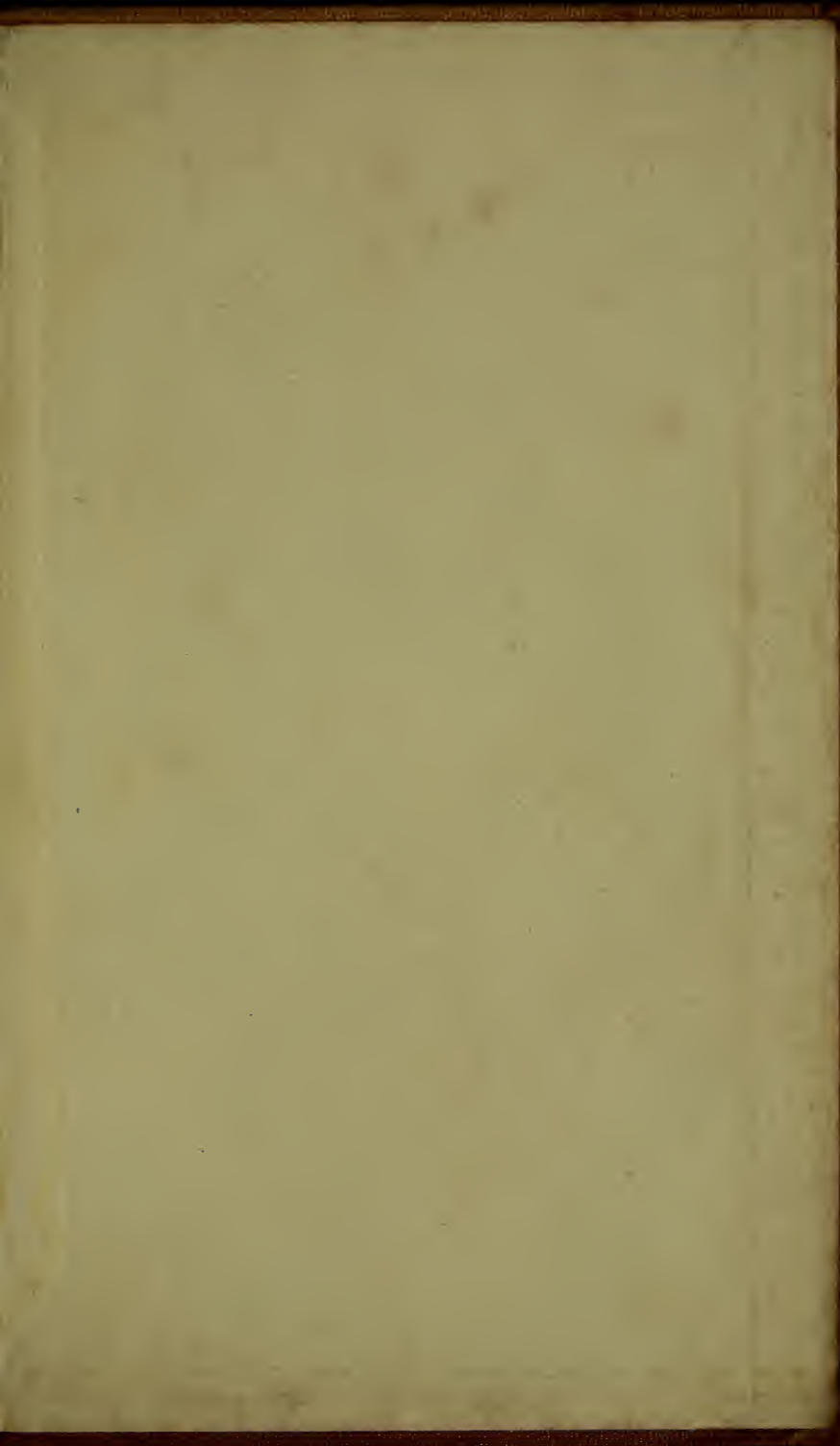
After their arrival, a fortnight passed away, and at the end of that time Mary was to name the day which was to unite her to Hardy. The marriage was to be strictly private, and to take place when the year of mourning for Sir Aldrich had expired. A very little while remained to that term, and it was short enough for the arrangements necessary.

It was an early hour on the wedding morning, when the little group of friends surrounding Bulstrode's heiress, led her to the altar, where the lips that spoke her baptismal vows joined her fate to that of Hardy, for time and for eternity. She looked supremely beautiful, arrayed in the most perfect simplicity. Tears of happy sensibility fell from her eyes, as the husband of her choice caught her to his breast

as his own for ever. The exquisite colouring of her cheek, was deepened to a crimson hue, and her whole countenance was illuminated with its most brilliant radiance. While Hardy, deeply agitated, could, for many moments, only hold her in his embrace, unable to speak his happiness, till at last his tongue was loosed, and, in a transport of the utmost emotion, he murmured to her ear, "mine own for ever, Mary, my own, my beautiful!"

THE END.





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